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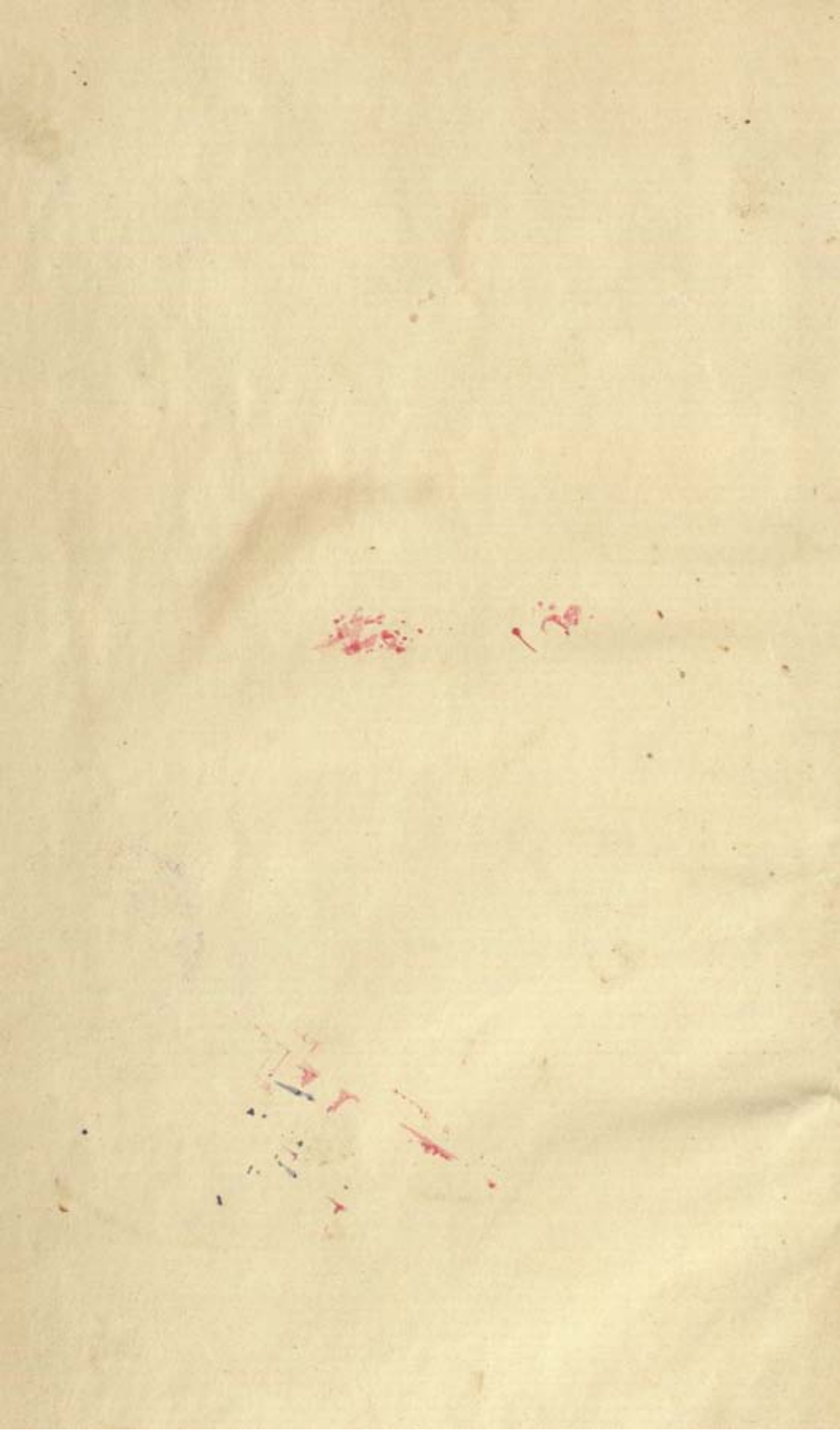
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# Indian Round Table Conference

39539

12th November, 1930—19th January, 1931

PROCEEDINGS OF SUB-COMMITTEES

(Volume VI)

[SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI (Franchise)]



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Proceedings of the Indian Round Table Conference in plenary session, and in Committee of the whole Conference, are contained in a separate volume, the Introductory Note to which explains, briefly, the procedure adopted by the Conference.

Proceedings of Sub-Committees are contained in nine volumes as below:—

- Volume I.—Federal Structure.
- „ II.—Provincial Constitution.
- „ III.—Minorities.
- „ IV.—Burma.
- „ V.—North-West Frontier Province.
- „ VI.—Franchise.
- „ VII.—Defence.
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# INDIAN ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

## SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI.

(Franchise.)

The Sub-Committee was constituted as follows:—

Sir W. A. Jowitt, (Chairman).	Sir Provash Chunder Mitter.
The Marquess of Zetland.	Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam.
Major the Hon. O. Stanley.	Raja of Parlakimedi.
Sir Robert Hamilton.	Mr. K. T. Paul.
Mr. Isaac Foot.	Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao.
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.	Mr. B. Shiva Rao.
Mr. C. Barooah.	Sardar Sampuran Singh.
Mr. J. N. Basu.	Sir Chimanlal Setalvad.
Sir Hubert Carr.	Rao Bahadur Kunwar Bisheshwar Dayal Seth.
Mr. C. Y. Chintamani.	Sir Phiroze Sethna.
Mr. Fazl-ul-Haq.	Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan.
Mr. A. H. Ghuznavi.	Begum Shah Nawaz.
Lieut. Col. H. A. J. Gidney.	Rao Bahadur Srinivasan.
Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah.	Mrs. Subbarayan.
Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain.	Mr. S. B. Tambe.
Mr. B. V. Jadhav.	Sardar Ujjal Singh.
Sir Cowasji Jehangir.	Mr. Zafrullah Khan.
Mr. N. M. Joshi.	
Dr. Narendra Nath Law.	

with the following terms of reference.

“ On what main principles is the franchise to be based for men and women ? ”

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST MEETING OF SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI. (FRANCHISE) HELD ON 19TH DECEMBER, 1930.

*Chairman:* Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the first Meeting of the Franchise sub-Committee, and perhaps you will allow me to say what an honour I feel it to preside, and the regret which I feel that I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting all of you. I hope I shall have that opportunity very shortly. Perhaps you will also allow me to say a word or two about the terms of reference to this sub-Committee. We have had circulated, and you will see in your places, a statement which starts by setting out what the terms of reference are, and I might with your permission just call your attention to it.



You will observe that the terms, and the only terms, of reference to us are "On what main principles is the franchise to be based for men and women?" The words there are "main principles," and it is obvious that we are not concerned with details. I think you will all agree that the details will have to be fixed by some expert Franchise Committee, and we need not deal with that topic here. We have only to deal with main principles.

I have suggested the following heads, and I shall, after reading them through, invite a general discussion in which anybody will state in particular as to whether they think these heads sufficiently cover the various points which we have to discuss.

The first head is "Number of Voters. Should the basis of the franchise be broadened? If so, what increase in the number of Voters is now practicable or advisable?" That does not rule out the question of universal suffrage, which will be appropriately discussed under that heading.

The second is "General basis of franchise. (i) Should the franchise qualifications be the same for all communities in the same area (women not being considered a community)? (ii) Assuming that age is not to be the only qualification, should there be (a) a property qualification, (b) an educational qualification, (c) any other qualification for example, military service? (iii) Do the recommendations made under (i) and (ii) above provide sufficiently for the enfranchisement of women? If not, should any special qualifications be prescribed for them?"

Then it is suggested to me that we may appropriately discuss the question of plural voting, and perhaps you might make a separate heading of that. We will call it 2 (a).

Then we come to "3. Detailed franchise qualifications. It will presumably be left to a franchise committee or committees to define the exact qualifications necessary to bring about the result desired under 1 in accordance with the principles recommended under 2." I have already stated that, on my reading of these terms of reference, that is inevitable, because that question is not left to us. "Are there in the opinion of the sub-Committee any other considerations which it is particularly desirable that the Franchise Committee should bear in mind?" For instance, we might discuss there the question of the over-representation of urban as opposed to the rural districts.

Then "4. The future electorate. Should provision for future extensions of the franchise be made now or should provincial legislatures be given complete, or limited, power to alter their franchise at any time or after a given number of years?"

Then the next heading is (you had better keep the two quite separate) "Federal or Central Legislatures. Should the franchise for any directly elected Federal or Central Legislature be the same as that for the Provincial Legislature, or, if not, in what way should the provincial Franchise be modified?"



Before I invite a general discussion over the whole field and ask for your assistance as to whether or not those headings embrace all the topics we have to discuss, I might just add this word of warning as to what we have not got to discuss. As I see it, we have not to discuss any question which appropriately falls within the purview of the Minorities Committee; that is to say, the questions for instance of communal electorates the question of the representation of minorities, and the question of the separate representation of special interests—commerce, industry or university. I realise that it is inevitable that there will be a certain amount of interlocking between his sub-Committee and the Minorities sub-Committee, and if difficulties arise as to whether a topic falls within our terms of reference or within the terms of reference of the Minorities sub-Committee, I think you would probably consider it desirable that I should have an opportunity of discussing the matter with the Prime Minister in order that we may make quite clear that both Committees are not travelling over the same ground. Subject to that, I think myself that these terms indicate sufficiently what we have to discuss, and I propose now to throw the question open for general discussion. After a general discussion we can then come down to the detailed consideration of the various points, if indeed you think that we have adequately set out the various points for discussion.

*Colonel Gidney:* If I understood you aright, you just now ruled that minority problems, or minority representation, is not to be included in our terms of reference. We who represent the minorities will certainly base our observations on our minority problems, and it seems to me, until I am corrected, impossible to separate the interests of a minority, so far as its franchise is concerned, from the general rules that would be applied.

*Chairman:* I shall naturally let the discussion go as widely as I can, only we must realise that there is a Minorities sub-Committee, and it would never do to have the work which we are doing here done all over again by them.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* There is another matter on which I would like your ruling, Sir. There are various constituencies with different electoral qualifications. I should like to know whether our discussion is to proceed only with reference to general considerations, or whether we can enter into the question of the franchise for, say, landlords or for the commercial community, or for the various other interests which are now represented in the Provincial Councils. For example, if the landlords are to be represented, their qualifications are set out in the existing electoral rule. Whether they require modification, and whether their franchise should also be discussed, is a matter for consideration. So far as I see it, the terms of reference here seem to refer generally only to the general constituencies in the Province.

*Chairman:* I am bound to say that I had thought that such matters as landlords' representation and so on would properly fall within the purview of the Minorities Committee—special consti-



tuencies. If we might start our discussion on that assumption, I will see the Prime Minister and find out whether that topic is going to be discussed by one or other Committee. If the other Committee are not going to discuss it we will discuss it here. We might start on the assumption that they are going to discuss it; then we can narrow the field of our discussion to the general constituencies.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: There is another point. There are a number of disqualifications for election which are set out in our rules. I presume that comes within the purview of the discussion here?

*Chairman*: Yes.

*Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain*: Is it permissible for this sub-Committee to enter into the question of franchise for each Province separately, or for all the Provinces taken as a whole?

*Chairman*: We should only lay down general principles. They would have to be worked out by an expert Franchise Committee, and I assume an expert Franchise Committee would have to consider the requirements and the needs and the conditions of each Province.

*Mr. K. T. Paul*: That virtually assumes that there would be differences as between the Provinces. There is a general question involved in the principle. Would there be conformity or not?

*Mr. Isaac Foot*: The fact that there has not been conformity between the Provinces is a matter which has been apparent to those who have judged the subject hitherto. That will come under our consideration.

*Chairman*: Yes.

*Mr. Joshi*: Most of the Delegates have come to this Conference hoping that India would get Dominion Status. We are also hoping that the Dominion Status will give political status not only to a few people in the country but to all people in the country. Dominion Status, or political self-government, has absolutely no meaning to those people who cannot vote in electing representatives to the Legislature. Some people are at present enfranchised; they have a vote, and they take part in the election for the Legislature. To that extent they are interested in the form of self-government that is established in the country, but to those people who are not enfranchised there is no meaning in Dominion Status. Their condition as regards self-government will be the same. So far as I individually am concerned I am not willing to make any difference between the masters on account of the colour of their skin, or on account of any other such consideration. To the masses in the country who are not enfranchised it is the same whether the rulers come from the higher classes in India or from Great Britain. The colour and the race of the master do not make any difference to them at all. So far as practical considerations are concerned it is the question



of economics which makes a difference. If the masters of India come from the masses, and if their economic interests are the same then surely there will be a difference in the relations of the masters to the subjects, because most of the subjects that come up for consideration in the Legislature by a Government have an economic bearing. There are very few subjects which touch the race of a man, the colour of a man, or the religion of a man. Therefore the main consideration which makes a difference between the masters and their subjects is the economic class. Those of us who are interested in self-government are also interested in seeing that the benefit of that self-government will be given to all people in the country. If the benefit of self-government is to be given to all people in the country the only method of doing so is to enfranchise all adult people in the country. There is no other way of giving them the benefit of self-government. A large number of Delegates who have come here have not come here to have a mere change of masters from the British bureaucracy to the Indian autocracy either of the Princes or of the smallest class that may be enfranchised. They have also not come here to substitute Indian bureaucracy for the bureaucracy of the British. They have come here to establish a real democracy in India, and if real democracy is to be established every citizen in India must be enfranchised. Unfortunately at present in India the qualification for a vote is a property qualification, except perhaps for a very small section of the electors in certain places where education is a qualification. I think that it is wrong to base the qualifications for voting on the considerations of property. Every citizen is interested in the form of government under which he is going to live. It is not only the people who hold property who are interested in the form of the Government. It is said that the people who possess property have a stake in the country, but, Sir, I want to ask the members who are gathered here whether there is any larger stake for a man than the stake of his life. There is no larger stake. A man may possess property, but the largest stake which he has is not his property but his life, and every citizen has a life. Therefore every citizen has a much larger stake in the country than the men who have got property. Of course the man who has got property has also some stake in the country, and the important stake is the stake of his life and not of his property. There is absolutely no reason why a difference should be made between people who possess property and people who do not possess property. Everyone has the same stake in the Government which is established. Therefore the main consideration on which enfranchisement should be based is the fact that a man is a citizen of the country. There may be other considerations, such as the age of the citizen. A child may not be enfranchised, and I can understand that. A child may not be enfranchised before the child knows how to vote. Apart from age I do not think that there is any valid reason for bringing in any consideration restricting the right of voting as a citizen, because, as I have said, every citizen has practically the same stake in the Government and in the country.



Then, Sir, it is said sometimes that some people need not get votes because they do not pay taxes. Unfortunately, in our country some distinction is made as regards those who pay direct taxes, and they are enfranchised. People who pay income tax are at present a large body of voters. Here again we are making a mistake. The people who pay direct taxes are not the only taxpayers in the country. We have a large revenue for our Provincial Governments, as well as for our Central Government, which comes from indirect taxation. Therefore, everyone who in some form or another pays indirect taxation pays taxation to the Government. From that point of view there is absolutely no reason why we should make a distinction between those people who pay their taxes direct and those people who pay their taxes indirect. As a matter of fact, if any class of taxpayer is to be omitted it should be the direct taxpayer and not the indirect taxpayer. The indirect taxpayer is a man who, in many cases, is taxed without his really knowing it. Such a man, therefore, must be first represented, instead of the man who pays taxes directly. I think that the principle of paying taxation has no bearing, because, if we go thoroughly into the matter, we shall find that many of the direct taxes can be also transferred to others. It is not every tax which seems to be direct which is a direct tax. A large number of taxes which look as if they are direct can also be transferred to others. That principle is a wrong principle. I would like this Conference, which has met to give self-government to India, to be bold, and to give real self-government to all people in the country and not self-government to a very small number only. When I say "to all people in the country" I do not make any distinction between men and women.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* And children too?

*Mr. Joshi:* If some people would like children to be enfranchised I shall not oppose it. I am quite willing to consider that question, whether children should be enfranchised or not. I suggest that children should not be enfranchised, but if there are others who say:—"Very well, let us also enfranchise others" I am quite willing to consider it. I know that difficulties will be brought forward with regard to establishing adult franchise. In the first place, it is always said that there is so much ignorance in the country. I quite agree that there is ignorance in the country. It is a very unfortunate circumstance, and if there is any blame to be attached it has to be attached to our Government, but, Sir, my point is that if illiteracy and ignorance is a disqualification, it is a disqualification for all those who are illiterate and ignorant. Unfortunately, that is at present not regarded as a disqualification in our country. People are given votes whether they are literate; or illiterate they are given votes whether they are ignorant or whether they know something. They are given votes simply because they possess property. I can understand people saying that every man who is to be given a vote must



learn up to a certain standard. I do not believe in it, but is understandable to me. That is not done in our country. If a man possesses some property he is qualified to vote, and in some Provinces if he has some income he may be qualified to vote. A large number of our present voters are illiterate. Because they are illiterate we have some system of voting where the people do not make a mark against the name but against the picture or some such thing. We have found some method by which even ignorant and illiterate people will be able to vote. Therefore that difficulty existed, but it has been surmounted in the case of a very large number of voters. I may say that it has been surmounted in the case of the majority of voters at present. Illiteracy cannot be regarded as a bar, because for the last ten years illiterate people have been exercising their right of voting and they have done it fairly well. I have not yet heard much complaint with regard to the illiterate voters having caused great mischief or having brought great disaster on the country. Therefore illiteracy is not a bar. Whether it is a bar or not, illiterate voters have been voting and they have not brought any disaster on the country.

Then, Sir, there is another difficulty that is brought forward, and that is the difficulty of the great number of large constituencies. As regards the constituencies being large, my point is, are the Indian people going to get rights of citizenship at any time or not? I do not see before me any prospect of the population of India going down to such an extent that there will be a time when the constituencies will be sufficiently manageable for a great franchise. I do not think that the population of India is going to go down.

If we are to go upon the experience of the past, the population of India is going to increase. Therefore you must make up your mind whether you are going to give the franchise to all people or not. Your difficulty is not going to be solved by waiting. The difficulty of the large constituency will always be with us, and has to be faced. There is no reason for waiting on account of the consideration that the constituencies will be large. I shall have to point out some methods when we come to details by which the difficulties of large constituencies can be solved. Moreover, we all fear that when we introduce new electoral methods there is some chance of the voters not doing their duty properly, and we have heard of corruption being introduced into politics. If there is any remedy against corruption it is to be found, in my judgment, in large constituencies. If, as in India, we may have 120 million voters, and we have a legislature of about 500, each constituency will have 250,000 voters on the average. A large number of people who seek the votes of the electorate at present spend large sums of money in so doing, but not many in the country will be prepared to spend sufficient money to obtain the suffrages of 250,000 people. Much of the corruption that we see in the elections will disappear with such large constituencies. People will stand on their merits, and not on account of their



money. Under present circumstances it is the man with the money who succeeds to a great extent, but if it comes to a question of spending a million rupees for election, I am doubtful whether anybody in the country will be prepared to put up such a sum. We could certainly introduce some method whereby elections were made more manageable, and those methods might be discussed by the Committee.

I therefore hope the Committee will accept the principle of adult suffrage, and discuss afterwards the methods by which we may arrange for voting procedure. I believe that if we fail to do this, and if we establish some form of Dominion status which is only intended for a few people, the delegates assembled here will not have done their duty towards the masses in our country. I hope that this Committee—a most important Committee from the point of view of the people of the country—will decide to give universal suffrage.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* There is no doubt about the ideal to be aimed at for the purpose of the franchise, whether in India or in any other country, is universal adult suffrage. On that there can be no difference whatever.

*Mr. Jadhab:* Is that your ideal?

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* Oh, yes. Whatever difficulty there may be in other quarters, there can be none from me. But there are certain practical considerations of a very grave character which cannot lightly be brushed aside at the present moment, and from the experience I have had in my own Province—I cannot claim to speak for others—I cannot with confidence support the suggestion that the time has arrived when, much as I should desire it, universal adult suffrage can be immediately introduced in my Province. The main consideration which is a hindrance to the achievement of that ideal immediately is the construction of the actual machinery for conducting elections. I am afraid that if an attempt were made to work it, it would be found to lead to a great deal of confusion. I recognise that in my Province the introduction of universal adult franchise would not add a very large number of voters of a description or intelligence very much different from the average voter that we have under the present qualification. Therefore, to my mind, the mere addition of a larger number of people would not make any difference to the exercise of the franchise provided I had confidence that arrangements with regard to such exercise would be adequate to meet the increased number of people who would be included. Illiteracy is no disqualification in India at present for the exercise of the franchise, but universal franchise would call for some very special arrangements to enable illiterate voters to record their votes. Therefore, within a practicable time and with a practicable number of polling stations, it would not be possible to have sufficient clerks to deal with the illiterate voters, and elections consequently would have to be spread over such a long period that there would be great confusion.



Then there is the lack of means of communication. We have had, even under our present system, a great deal of difficulty in trying to arrange that polling stations should be set up to accommodate rural voters, and it is a common experience in the Punjab for a polling station, in the less populated districts, to be situated anything from 20 to 50 miles from the home of a rural voter. The voter is expected to travel that distance at his own expense as it is a corrupt practice to provide any conveyance. Even in the more populated districts, the average distance is from 10 to 15 miles and with the lack of communications in the rural areas it could be imagined what great difficulties are being felt at the present moment. If universal adult franchise were introduced immediately, these difficulties would be multiplied a hundred-fold.

Therefore, without going into details, although it is my passionate hope that universal adult franchise may be introduced as early as practicable, I must admit that it is impossible to introduce it immediately or until experience has been gained by a considerable widening or lowering of the franchise to indicate how universal franchise would work in the future. I certainly think that there should be a very considerable broadening of the franchise, but not immediately to the extent suggested by Mr. Joshi.

Then the question arises, if we are going to set some limits, what kind of limit we should set to the right to exercise the franchise. No doubt any limit set would be open to criticism, and would be artificial but, after all, the obvious limits are always found under the heading of property, taxation, business experience, experience of administration, or sense of responsibility in any other walk of life. Qualifications have to be found in all these directions, and when we have to select a class from the whole of the community we shall naturally select that class which has had an opportunity of dealing with matters where the exercise of responsibility was required. My suggestions with regard to the actual extent to which the franchise for the provincial legislature should be lowered in my own province I will reserve until the sub-Committee gets down to details. But there are two questions, not of detail, but of principle, which have been alluded to. One is as to whether provincial Councils should be given powers subsequently to alter the franchise with regard to their own province. I certainly think they should be given such power, and the only limit laid on the exercise of such power should be that it must be exercised only after the expiry of at least five years from the introduction of the new constitutional system. That would give an experience of working the franchise for at least two elections, and in the light of that experience it would be open to them to pass such resolutions as might seem proper for further extension of the franchise. With regard to the limit to which they might be allowed to carry it, I would suggest no limit whatever. If, after experience, it is found that arrangements can be made for throwing open the franchise for everybody above a certain age, they would be welcome to pass such a resolution.



The second consideration to which I want to draw attention at this stage is this: we are aware that arrangements with regard to franchise, affecting not only the direct question as to how many people are to be admitted to its exercise, but many other matters are open to be dealt with by the Conference.

It has a very direct effect upon the question of representation of the minorities, certainly the Moslem minority. We know in practice that in many provinces the voting strength of certain communities does not correspond to the strength which they have in population. For instance, a community in a particular province may be, say, 30 per cent. of the population. On the voting register members of that community may appear only to the extent of 15 or 20 per cent. There are such variations throughout the provinces, and that is one of the factors which is causing a great deal of trouble in the solution of the general minorities question so far as the representation of different communities in the legislatures is concerned. If there is a community which has a comparatively small proportion in the population, but which has a large share in the voting register, naturally the members of that community are anxious that the franchise should not be further reduced, or should not at least be rapidly reduced, because that would immediately bring their proportion in the voting register down to the proportion which would correspond more clearly to their proportion in the population. On the other hand, communities which have a high proportion in the population but a low proportion in the voting register are anxious, apart from general considerations which apply to the broadening of the franchise and to every adult being admitted to the exercise of the franchise, to have the franchise from their own point of view broadened so that the disparity between their numbers in the population and their ratio in the voting register should disappear.

From that point of view the question was taken into consideration by the Simon Commission, and one suggestion made by them is that any Franchise Committee which may be set up to settle the details of the franchise should be given directions so to endeavour as to give to each community, as far as practicable, the same proportion in the voting register as they occupy in the population. That has to be done, as they suggest, not by having different qualifications for different communities, but by having additional qualifications in addition to those settled generally for the whole province or for the whole country—to devise additional qualifications which should operate only with regard to those particular communities with regard to whom it is found that there is a great disparity between their numbers and their proportion in the voting register. That is a consideration which I desire very strongly to press upon the attention of this committee, and for two reasons. One is that if that result is achieved, then any opposition which might at present exist among members of certain communities, who have under the present system a position of advantage, to a further extension of the franchise, would automatically disappear. When they know that keeping the franchise



at a high level would not result in their retaining a much higher proportion in the voting register than they have in the population, the general considerations for the extension of the franchise would appeal to them, and they, along with others, would strive that the franchise should be considerably lower. That is one consideration. Otherwise, I am afraid there is bound to be opposition to a very large extension of the franchise from the members of such communities.

The second consideration is this. If the ideal to be attained is universal adult franchise—if that is the ideal condition of franchise—and if the qualifications which have in the meantime to be imposed are due entirely to certain considerations of a practical kind—for instance, that universal adult franchise cannot be immediately introduced—then it must be conceived that those qualifications in the meantime are of a more or less artificial nature in order to restrict the franchise within practical limits. If that is so then we must go back to the ideal in this sense—that each community is entitled to exercise the same amount of influence over the elections of the legislature as its numbers entitle it to; and eventually, as soon as universal adult franchise is introduced, that is exactly the amount of influence that it is going to exercise. If that is so, and you have to put in qualifications in the meantime in order to restrict the numbers, it is only fair that each community, from the very start of the new constitution, should be able to influence elections to the legislatures to the same extent to which it would be entitled to influence them under an ideal system of franchise. That being so, it is also necessary that such considerations as have been suggested by the Simon Commission should be before any Franchise Committee that is set up.

There are other matters of detail, but with your permission, Sir, I will address myself to those when they come forward.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Haq:* So far as these subjects are concerned, it seems to me that they are divisible into two main parts. The first question that arises for discussion is whether it is practical and advisable to begin with a system of adult franchise or not. Secondly, if adult franchise is neither desirable nor practicable we have to consider certain other questions. The point has been directly raised by Mr. Joshi, who pleaded for immediate adult franchise. He himself has recognised some of the difficulties in the way, one of which is the illiteracy of the people generally in our country. So far as illiteracy is concerned, I do think it is a bar, but it is not an insuperable bar; but there is also another consideration which we must not lose sight of in considering the question from a practical point of view. Speaking for my province of Bengal, I have found that the voters generally who come from the rural areas are so very much under the influence either of their money-lender or of other classes of society that they are scarcely able to exercise a free vote. Whether we are responsible for the illiteracy in the country possibly some future Commission will decide, but we have to face the fact that there is an appalling



amount of illiteracy in the country and, along with that, a huge amount of indebtedness of the peasantry which makes it practically impossible for them to exercise a free vote. So long as these conditions remain—and let us hope that they will soon disappear—it seems to me that it is not within the sphere of practical politics to recommend that we should start straight away with adult suffrage.

Shortly, therefore, my answer to the first question is in the negative, and I am opposed to the introduction of adult suffrage at once.

As regards the principle on which we should consider the question of a broadening of the franchise, I agree generally with the views which have been put forward by the previous speaker. I would only add one other. It seems to me that the question of the broadening of the franchise is really to be considered with the question of increasing the size of the electorates. Consider for a moment things as they are at present. Again I speak for my province and for my own constituency. I represent a Muhammadan constituency in my district of 21,000 voters. At the time of elections there are 71 polling stations provided. Mine is a river district, and the communication is only by boat right throughout the year. The inconvenience of inducing electors to come to the polling stations is so great that I have hardly ever found more than 20 per cent. of the voters coming to the poll to exercise their votes.

I submit it is of no use conferring a franchise on people when they cannot really exercise it on account of adverse circumstances or on account of physical difficulties which present themselves in the country. Therefore what I submit is this—that in considering the question of the lowering of the franchise you have also to take into consideration the result it will have on the size of the legislative councils. At the present moment the Bengal legislative council consists of 140 members, of whom 116 are elected. If the franchise is brought in in such a way that the number of voters would be doubled, we would have nearly 250 members. However much we may like to have the legislative council the size of the British Parliament, at the present moment it is not within the sphere of practical politics.

Briefly, therefore, in considering the question of the broadening of the franchise, we have to take into view the effect it will have on the legislative councils to which these various electors would return their members. That is a question which has been considered by the legislative Provincial Council's committee, which has recommended only a slight increase in the size. If we broaden the franchise to a very large extent the result will be that we will have huge constituencies which it will be impossible for candidates to manage. It is not a question of mere corruption; the difficulty is that if there is a huge constituency, a very large proportion of which do not exercise their vote, it is impossible to say whether the candidate who is returned really represents the views of the majority of that constituency.



Unless a very large proportion of the constituency do exercise their vote, it is impossible to say whether there is a good representation or not of that constituency. There may be many circumstances in favour of a particular candidate, and therefore although that candidate may not represent the views of the majority of the constituency, he may be successful in defeating a rival who is less fortunately placed in many respects but who represents the views of the large majority of the constituency. Therefore it is not within practical politics to increase the size of the constituencies indefinitely. We have, therefore, to keep in view the fact the increase in the size of the constituencies reflects on the increase in the size of the legislative councils; and if the legislative councils have got to be kept within limits, it is necessary also that we should keep the various constituencies within limits.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* My friend, Mr. Joshi said that most of us have come here to get responsible government. I entirely agree, but if we get responsible government it is necessary that we should make the responsible government successful. On the one extreme you may have responsible government with adult suffrage. On the other extreme you may have responsible government technically responsible with 50 men. We do not want either. We want a responsible government that can run successfully; we want real responsibility, we want our voters to cast their votes knowing how to exercise their judgment. With that preliminary observation I desire to go into the question of how we can attain it. One main point, to which I would like to draw the attention of my friends here, is that India, if anything, is a country of villages. Out of her 246 millions of people, 226 millions live in rural areas. Turning to my own province, out of 46 millions of people, 43 millions live in villages. The problem is that if we, I hope at no distant date, want to get responsible government that responsible government must overwhelmingly be the responsible government of our villages. Turning now to my own province, my esteemed friend Mr. Fazl-ul-Haq has told you that the Bengal Legislative Council at present has 140 members. Out of that number, 26 are nominated and 114 are elected. Out of the 114 that are elected, 85 are returned from the general constituencies, and the rest by certain interests such as British Mercantile Interest, Indian Mercantile Interest, Universities, Landlords and so on. In these 85 general constituencies are represented 46 millions of people, of whom 14 millions are bread winners, and 3 millions are literates. Even if we are to aim at getting a comparatively small percentage of the 14 millions bread winners we must inordinately increase the size of our council. That is not practical politics. As has been pointed out by previous speakers, if we increase the number of our voters there will be various difficulties. I will not cover the ground again, but I have a practical suggestion to offer with regard to representation of rural areas. The Simon Commission has recommended that the number of seats may be roughly doubled. If we double the number of seats and, let me assume, that we shall get either 225 or 250 seats, my first



addition is separate rural constituencies from urban constituencies. Speaking with practical experience of elections I may say that where in one district there are seven or eight municipalities and the rest are rural areas it is easier to bring your municipal voters to the poll. It is easier to create a civic sense in your municipal voters. Then the difficulties of transport, the difficulties of ignorance, the difficulties of poverty, and the difficulties of getting into touch with the rural voters are realities which you cannot ignore. The result is that if in any particular constituency there are 20,000 voters, of whom about 4,000 are from the municipal areas, something like 3,000 out of those 4,000 come to the poll, but of the remaining 16,000 it is difficult even to get 4,000 or 5,000 to the poll. Therefore, unless you separate urban from rural constituencies, you will always find that the urban interests and the urban people will overweigh the results of elections.

Coming to the question of rural constituencies, and how to give them better representation, one way of bringing it about will no doubt be by an extension of the franchise, by lowering the franchise, and ultimately (if Mr. Joshi's idea be accepted) by giving manhood suffrage, but will manhood suffrage, or a great lowering of the franchise, give real responsibility? I make bold to say, under present conditions, no. Steeped in poverty and in ignorance, as the bulk of our rural voters are (whoever may be responsible for it in the past that is the reality to-day) you cannot expect them to exercise the franchise intelligently. The Simon Commission has told us that 80 rupees, a modest estimate, and 107 rupees, a more optimistic estimate, is the annual income of a citizen in India. Eighty rupees means £6, and 107 rupees means a little over £8. On your average income of £100 a year you can well understand the difference. I am again quoting from the Simon Commission. My personal estimate is that it is something like £4 a year and not £6 a year. Be that as it may, if that is the average, there are the richer people, there are the wealthier people in the towns, and there are even in the rural areas wealthier people. Therefore the bulk of the people in the rural areas must be very poor. If you want to give them representation my practical suggestion is this. At the present moment, if you double the number of seats, and it is necessary to increase the number of constituencies, it will roughly speaking, increase the rural constituencies by 25 per cent. Speaking again on behalf of my own Province, we have 25 districts where reforms have been introduced out of our 27 districts. If in those 25 districts you give one additional seat each to every one of the village constituencies you will have a class of people who are vitally interested in rural welfare. It is those people who are carrying the day to day administration of rural districts. If you give even one seat to each of those people then you will have a number of people who are vitally interested in rural welfare, and who can intelligently speak for their less fortunate brethren. You will have a number of people who are well versed in the problems of rural affairs, and, with the 100 or 120 additional seats that you have, it will be easy to provide that. Sir, that is



the proposition which I would very seriously lay before the future Committee which will be set up to work out details, and I would ask them very carefully to consider it.

On the general question of adult suffrage I would like to make an observation. In your country at any rate, responsible government has succeeded wonderfully. If you take the history of your country up to 1832, in spite of the fact that the aristocracy were the only people who were accountable for the responsible government, England was a great country. England was a powerful country even before 1832. You have a happy knack of adjusting your differences, and, with the rise of middle classes, with the large wealth due to the Napoleonic Wars, and with the expansion of the Universities, after 1832 you took in the upper and middle classes. Then that great statesman of yours, (his politics may not be the politics of to-day) Disraeli, had another expansion. Coming from 1885 to 1892 and 1918, even in 1918 there was the old franchise qualification of £10 a year. In our Indian money that is 135 rupees, but in Bengal our franchise qualification is either two rupees chaukidari tax or one rupee cess. One rupee cess in the case of an agriculturist is £22 annual value. In the case of a tenure holder it may be at the most from 10 to 12 rupees. I admit that there is a great difference in wealth between your country and mine, but surely it does not make such a very great difference. On the other hand, you have had six centuries of experience in running responsible government. You had a compulsory Primary Education Act in 1870, and if, after 48 years of working of your compulsory Primary Education Act you are content with an annual value qualification of £10, surely two rupees of chaukidari tax, which represents 10 or 12 rupees annual value, and one rupee of cess, which represents the figure which I have already mentioned, is not too low. We, as students of history, as people who desire ardently to copy the institutions of other countries, may be very desirous of going on at a pace for which we are not yet fit. If we advance before our time, instead of getting a responsible government which will succeed, we shall soon be getting irresponsible government which will end in confusion. When I say that we are not yet fit I do not for a moment say that by intelligence, by ability, and by outlook on life, we are not fit, but our traditions are different, our mode of life is different, and our outlook on life is different. Because our traditions are different, and because our outlook on life is different, that is no reason why we should take six centuries, or even one century, to attain the object which we all have in view, namely responsible government, responsible to every human unit of the vast Indian citizenship. With the example of other countries, and with the innate intelligence and ability of Indians, if we start with a government really responsible to those who can exercise their responsibility we shall much sooner attain manhood suffrage than by making experiments which are bound to fail. Therefore, Sir, I submit that we should reject adult suffrage however right in political theory it is. We are not here to lay down details; we are



here to lay down principles. Let us lay down this principle: cast your suffrage in favour of those who can intelligently exercise that suffrage, and do not for Heaven's sake forget the rural areas. If any other practical suggestion can be put forward by which our rural citizens under their present conditions can be better represented than by the suggestions which I have made, that suggestion will certainly also be considered seriously.

*Lord Zetland:* Mr. Chairman, if India does indeed desire to have a full democratic system of government it is quite obvious that adult suffrage is the goal at which she must aim, but, Mr. Chairman, not all people of India, and I think not all people at this table, are democrats. I had expected that before now, in reply to the speeches made by Mr. Joshi and others, we would have had the views of those who consider that the time has not yet come when a large extension of the franchise in India should be made. However, we have not yet had such speeches, and I am not going to make such a speech. I agree with the last speaker that it really is very desirable that we should at any rate aim at some system which would give the rural areas real representation in the new legislatures. In spite of all that Mr. Joshi has said, I am impressed with the tremendous practical difficulties which at present stand in the way of adult suffrage in India. At the present time in India you have an electorate of between six and seven millions. Only a proportion of that electorate has ever so far exercised the right to vote, and I suppose that if we said that three or four millions exercised the franchise at any one general election we should be within the mark. Considerable practical difficulty has been experienced even in recording the votes of that comparatively small number. The elections have lasted for several days. One of the speakers pointed out that although illiteracy does not by any means connote a lack of intelligence, illiteracy is a practical difficulty in the way of recording votes, and you cannot record illiterate votes at the same speed as you can record literate votes.

The question of lack of communications, referred to by Mr. Zafrullah Khan, is a very real difficulty, not only in the Punjab but in every part of India. In Eastern Bengal the whole countryside during a long period of the year is completely under water, and the only way in which voters could be got to the poll would be by means of river boats. So I could go on and give any number of examples of the practical difficulties of working adult suffrage in India at the present time. What we have to ask ourselves, therefore, is this: Is there any system short of adult suffrage by means of which we could obtain something very close to the results of adult suffrage? I believe that there is, namely, a system under which groups, each represented by a head man, often known in India as a "mukhi," might through him exercise the franchise. The system is one certainly not unknown in India, and amongst some communities is comparatively common. It seems to me that it would be practicable in the rural areas to have the population divided up into groups each to be represented by a head man.



*Mr. Joshi:* Elected?

*Lord Zetland:* Well, selected or elected.

*Mr. Joshi:* If you agree to have him elected, it will come to the same thing as the franchise.

*Lord Zetland:* That is precisely the argument I am endeavouring to develop—a head man selected or possibly elected to represent a group. It has been estimated—and the figure, I think, has been mentioned by one of the speakers this afternoon—that if you were to have adult suffrage in India you would add something like 120 millions to the number of voters. If, on the other hand, you were to divide those 120 millions into groups, say of 20 each, you would get a very much smaller number of electors. Each group would be represented by its head man. Thus an electorate of manageable proportions would be secured. Referring to what Sir P. C. Mitter said with regard to those people in the villages who are working the Village Self-Government Act—he was referring more particularly to Bengal—those are the people who know what are the requirements of the peasant population. Nothing used to strike me more in my tours of the villages of Bengal, particularly Eastern Bengal, than the way in which a few men, partly elected, sometimes selected by more informal means, to represent the villagers, came together around a table and discussed affairs and, within the powers assigned to them by the Village Self-Government Act, which was passed during my time in Bengal, administered the affairs of the countryside. I put forward this suggestion as a possible means, not only of securing adequate representation of the village population of India in the Legislative Council—and it has to be remembered that more than 70 per cent. of the total population of India depend upon agriculture in some form or other for their livelihood—but also as giving us very largely, without all the practical difficulties, the same results as would follow from the adoption of adult suffrage.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* Would the head man to whom Lord Zetland alluded directly select the members?

*Lord Zetland:* The head man would have a vote for his group to elect a member.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* There would be no further dilution?

*Lord Zetland:* No.

*Divan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* How do you propose to make up the group?

*Lord Zetland:* That is a detail, no doubt an important detail, which I should be disposed to leave to a special Franchise Committee. I should not lay great stress on the way in which they are grouped, so long as the grouping takes place.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* In my Province of Bengal there are 5,000 villages, with a population of less than 3,000. About 17,000 have a population of from 1,000 to 2,000. Is it the idea that each village should constitute one electoral unit?



*Lord Zetland*: I would not do away with the existing franchise. I would give this group system of representation to all those people who at present are not qualified to exercise the vote—that is to say, you get down much more to the labouring classes and the very small people who do not pay, in the case of Bengal, a two-rupee tax, or whatever the qualification may be.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: It is in addition to the present electorate?

*Lord Zetland*: Yes, and I would form constituencies of the group electors separate from the existing electorate.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: Without separating them into caste communities?

*Lord Zetland*: I do not want to go into that question; if I did I should get into the province of the Minorities sub-Committee. My idea of a group would be a small one, smaller than that which Sir P. C. Mitter has in mind. The sort of group I conceived was one of 20 villagers, a head man having a vote for each 20 villagers. It would be a very small group.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: A village of 200 people would have 10 votes?

*Lord Zetland*: Yes, that is right.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I might point out that a system somewhat similar to that is in existence in agricultural Denmark.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: Ideally Mr. Joshi's proposal is unexceptionable, and so far as the difficulties of large constituencies and of bringing voters to the polling station are concerned, these lend themselves to solution. At present, in some elections, we find about 4,000 or 5,000 voters required to come to one particular polling station, and four or five men sit there spending the whole day recording the votes. Difficulties might be met by increasing the number of the polling stations. I would say that the polling station should be placed where the voters happen to live. Those are practical difficulties which lend themselves to common-sense solutions. I would not oppose this question of adult suffrage on the ground that people who have not got property qualifications should not be given the vote, nor would I put forward the argument with regard to non-payment of tax, because I do not believe that anyone escapes payment of tax in one form or another. But there is one insuperable difficulty I feel in admitting adult franchise immediately, and that is one which Mr. Joshi also fears.

*Mr. Joshi*: I fear no difficulty.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: Mr. Joshi says that if there was adult suffrage it might mean a mere change of masters. He does not want merely to change from a bureaucratic to an autocratic master, or *vice versa*. If adult suffrage were extended to-day that would be exactly the danger. Most of our voters are confined to the rural parts, and on going to the rural parts we find that the landowning classes there—and therefore the taxpaying classes—are numerically much smaller than those who do not own any lands, and therefore do not pay any tax, thus being unqualified. But



it must also be admitted that in a village the man who does not own any land is economically dependent upon the man who does. In my Province we find that in most villages the major portion of the land is owned by one man, the rest of the land being distributed among a large number of small owners. The result now is that we get about one-tenth or one-fifteenth of the villagers going to the polling booth, and among these one man might own three-fourths of the land, all the others combined owning the other fourth. During the last three or four elections we have had some interesting experience in this connection. The constituencies are so large that it is not possible for a candidate to go and address meetings attended by voters or to come into personal contact with many of them. At the first election it was the experience that we went to the more important villages and saw the most important man there, with the result that most of the people went to the polling booth and voted as the principal man told them to vote. But as time went on, in succeeding elections, we had to go not merely to the principal man, but also to the more important of the various groups of voters, with the result that in the 1929 election we found that a man who owned the largest extent of land was not able to exercise the same influence and power in advising the people owning less land to vote in the way he wanted them to do. They were able to exercise their own discretion, and give their vote no longer according to the dictates of the principal man who had previously determined their choice.

If you are now going to extend the franchise by giving it to every adult in the village you will be giving it to a large number of people who are economically dependent on the principal man. The result will be that when we come to the elections next time the principal man in the village will be able to carry his own way; and instead of it being a rule of the people, and a democratic rule, it will be a rule of the important man in each place. The elections will be mostly swayed by the more well-to-do, whose rule it is Mr. Joshi wants to avoid.

I am afraid the indirect election which Lord Zetland was pleased to suggest would also not be very welcome. There again there will be the same difficulty. It might be possible to chalk out various groups, one man in each group sending out one man; but the election, being held in the village itself directly under the nose of the most important man in the village, it would again become a rule of the top people.

The answer might be that this difficulty has to be faced at some time or other. My suggestion would be this—to compensate the depressed classes for their economic dependence by an intellectual independence. Compared with 10 years ago the depressed class man is to-day much more independent of the surrounding circumstances by reason of further education; and I certainly think that we will soon be getting to the stage when the important man in the village will not be able to exercise the same influence over the landless and otherwise disqualified people of to-day.



Therefore I would suggest that while, for the time being, sitting here as we do, we restrict it to some sort of property qualification or direct tax paying qualification (at least for the rural parts), we leave it to the various legislative councils to decide when and how they like to extend the franchise. I would not even put the restriction, which has been suggested, of saying that the legislative councils shall not interfere with the franchise for another five years. If immediately, for the first election, with the experience which they have fresh in their minds, they think that a further extension of the franchise should be made, I think we ought not to stand in the way of the legislative councils for the various provinces coming to that decision. There must be some sort of property qualification if we are going to have, I will not say a fully democratic government, but if we are going to prepare the way for a fully democratic government, and we should leave it to the representatives and the people in the various legislative bodies to say when and how they will extend the franchise to the various people.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* I agree with my friend Mr. Joshi that we have come to England to get a full measure of self-government, but I am afraid that I can agree with no other statement of his. Therefore my task, as far as Mr. Joshi is concerned, has been considerably decreased, for I have not to point out where I disagree.

We were told just now by Sir P. C. Mitter something of your own constitutional history as far as franchise is concerned, and there is nothing I can say which will not be known to the British Delegation. But I would like to give a few figures of the progress of the franchise in this country for the information of my friends of the British Indian delegation who may not be aware of them.

In England after the Reform Bill of 1832 many will be surprised to hear that only 3 per cent. of the population got the vote. From 1832 to 1867 it went up to 4.5 per cent. of the population. In England during the years 1841 to 1845 the percentage of literacy amongst the men was 67.4 per cent., and amongst women 51.1 per cent. The figures for my own Presidency, in 1919, as to literacy were men 15.7 and women 2.7; and the percentage of the population which got the vote in 1919 was 4.03. These figures speak for themselves. To those of my English friends who contend that the local councils do not represent the peoples of India on the present franchise, my reply is that our councils represent our provinces to-day better than the House of Commons represented the people of England between the years 1832 and 1867.

Sir, you will find men in England and in India who talk about government being broad based on the will of the people. You know your own conditions under your present franchise. Literacy in this country is now 100 per cent. With regard to literacy in my country, I have no authentic figures but I do not think they are any better than they were in 1919. That leads me to the principle of whether literacy and franchise are linked together



or not. I have heard it said in this country that a broadening of the franchise is the best education you can give to a people. It may be so for some people, but it is an education at the cost of a section—not an unimportant section—of a part of the country. I do not believe in education of that sort.

Sir, I do not desire to go into facts and figures as to why the percentage of literacy in India is so low. The fact is that it is low. I have given you the figures, and we can only base our franchise for the future on that percentage of literacy. I desire to contest most strongly that public opinion in England which argues that a full advance in self-government cannot be given to India because they are reluctant to broaden the franchise on account of the percentage of literacy. If that argument was used in other parts of the world then the only answer would be to leave the government in the hands of another country where literacy was more advanced. No country in Europe has ever adopted that argument, but I do agree with Sir P. C. Mitter when he says that when we claim a full measure of self-government we do ask you to take care that that government shall be placed in the hands of people who will act with a sense of responsibility. If you force us into a position which is based on the argument that a further advance should be broad based on the will of the people, we shall accept it, but the risks will not be our responsibility. In short, that is the argument I desire to place before you.

*Lord Zetland:* Are you opposed to any extension of the franchise?

*Sir C. Jehangir:* I am. I am opposed to any further extension of the franchise. My arguments have led up to that.

I am not afraid of saying that here or in my own country. It will be considered to be a retrograde opinion, but, along with the claim which I put forward for a full measure of self-government, I also put forward a claim that that full measure of self-government shall be in the hands of men who can use the power which you have given them with a sense of responsibility.

*Mr. Foot:* When you say "Men" would you be agreeable to an extension to women?

*Sir C. Jehangir:* Yes. The women have got the same franchise as men in my province. It may be that the women do not get it in the same numbers or in the same percentage because it is a property franchise. When we talk of a property franchise let us be perfectly clear as to what it is. It is a rental franchise. It is not an ownership of property. Any man or woman in the city of Bombay who pays a rental of 10 rupees a month gets a vote, and naturally there are more men who pay a rental of 10 rupees a month than women. There are also other qualifications which are of a higher character but the lowest is a 10 rupees rental. That 10 rupees rental I admit has brought a large number of illiterate men on to the electoral roll. You have heard that just now, and you have heard Mr. Joshi very graphically describe how we manage to make these illiterate people vote but that cannot be called a qualification.



Is the argument that a certain percentage of your electorate has today to use symbols to enable them to vote an argument for saying that a larger number shall be brought on to the electoral roll, who have to use a symbol, who cannot read and write, who cannot understand what they are doing, and who can only vote for the picture of elephant or a knife or a spear? Sir, it is an argument to show that the franchise is low enough but I am not going to ask you to tighten it up.

*Mr. Joshi:* Why?

*Sir C. Jehangir:* It would perhaps be even logical to suggest that. Unfortunately in this world sometimes we cannot be logical. I am certain that my noble friend opposite has said many things which are not logical, and therefore, he cannot insist on my being absolutely and completely logical. When he talks about even children getting the franchise I think that he is out of order when he talks of logic.

*Mr. Joshi:* I did not say that.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* These are the main grounds upon which I would oppose an extension of the franchise. I am also in favour of indirect elections. I am not going into the details now because this a general discussion. When we come to the details I am quite prepared to put a scheme before you, but I am not going to be driven into going into details just now. I am also in favour of indirect elections. I am in favour of the principle of electoral colleges.

*Mr. Foot:* You mean that you will have provincial councils all on the electoral college basis, doing away with the present?

*Sir C. Jehangir:* No: the present franchise being the basis. I am not going to put forward these details just now. There is ample time in which to offer them. What I do desire to say is that I am not against indirect elections. I think that a well thought out scheme of indirect elections will meet with general approval.

*Chairman:* Is that in addition to the existing franchise or in substitution for it?

*Sir C. Jehangir:* Sir, I should prefer not to answer that question immediately. I think that you might combine both, but if after all you come to the conclusion that your franchise is to be enlarged then I think that an indirect system is a *sine qua non*. I would be quite prepared to accept on the present franchise direct elections plus indirect elections if with a broad franchise. Therefore, Sir, without being drawn into details, I think that I have said quite enough to show what I personally think, but I would desire to warn my friends both in England and in India. I think that the experience in some countries is that a broadening of the franchise has led to autocracy in the end. You have broadened the franchise to an extent which the country cannot stand, and you end in autocracy. The history of modern Europe shows that.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* You will explain that also later on.



*Sir C. Jehangir:* If that is not understandable I cannot make it clearer. We know that in certain countries of Europe to-day there is autocracy. The cause of it was this attempt at adult franchise when the country was not fit for it. If my friend Mr. Joshi desires autocracy in India there can be no easier method of getting it than by following his own suggestions.

*Mr. Barooah:* I am an advocate of adult franchise, but I go slowly and with caution. Considering the present state of things I do not think that it is either practicable or desirable to introduce it in India at the present time. It is bound to create disorder, confusion, and chaos. I need not go into the details because the obstacles are known more or less to everybody in this room. I therefore suggest that the franchise should be considerably broadened by lowering the qualifications as much as possible, and that steps should also be taken so that not one literate man or woman may be excluded. I hold, however, that universal adult franchise should be our ideal. In order to enable us to approach this ideal more easily and quickly it will be advisable not to make projects for future extensions of the franchise just now, but to give our provincial legislatures full power to broaden their franchise whenever they think it fit and proper. Besides the property and educational qualifications I think that other qualifications such as the payment of direct or indirect taxes, as well as military service, should be regarded as sufficient qualification for voting. I know that a large franchise for women may not be practicable at present in all parts of India, but, nevertheless, I would not debar a single qualified woman from voting. I would give them equal power with men for voting. Considering the very rapid progress that our women have made during recent years I am sure that this scheme would be quite successful in the very near future. I accept the Simon recommendations as to the qualifications of women for voting. I have personal experience of the disadvantages of large constituencies. In my opinion the best thing to do is to make the constituencies considerably smaller in size and to increase the number of members accordingly. This, however, is a matter which I think ought to be left to the Franchise Committee to be appointed hereafter. It is universally agreed that every province has its different circumstances. I, therefore, cannot recommend the same qualifications for voters in every province. This is again a matter which I think ought to be left to be decided by a future committee. As regards the Central Legislature, in order to make it a popular House it is extremely necessary that there should be direct voting. I am aware of the difficulties. It has been worked now in spite of these difficulties, and I have every reason to believe that it will work better in the future. I will not, however, object if an attempt is made to try both direct and indirect voting at the same time.

*Mr. K. T. Paul:* I wish, in the first place, to say something with regard to this question of literacy and illiteracy. I am afraid that there is a fallacy current in the minds of most people that literacy is indispensable for education or for knowledge. I had to discuss



this point with the Linlithgow Commission in India in connection with rural education, and then I had to study the figures. I have not got those figures precisely in mind just now, but I think that I can indicate them sufficiently on this occasion to point out a real difficulty. Our population during the last decade from 1911 to 1921 was almost stationary. It increased only at the rate of one-half per cent. per annum. Even at that rate of increase in those ten years we had added 15 million people to our population. The conventional ratio of those who are of school-going age to the total population is 28 per cent. If out of 15 million people 28 per cent. is of the school-going age you will see what an immense number of people have been added to the responsibility of education. It is because of this terrific rate at which our population is increasing that we are unable to overtake the question of illiteracy. While every effort is being made by expenditure of money, by training of teachers, and by providing school plant, to increase the education of the young, the number of illiterates in the country, and also the percentage of illiteracy, is increasing. That is entirely due to the rate at which the population is increasing. We will never be able to overtake this question of illiteracy except through a scheme of adult education, but that is another question. As things are if the question of franchise is to be directly related in any mathematical ratio to the number of literates in the country (as apparently Sir C. Jehangir and Mr. Barooah would want) I believe that it would be a hopeless proposition. It will take something like a century or more before we can achieve what we, and I believe they, wish. I want again to say something from my own personal experience. On the other hand, we find that the Indian villager, even although he is illiterate, is quite able to take care of a very large number of things of ordinary importance.

*Lord Zetland:* I quite agree.

*Mr. K. T. Paul:* The noble Marquess referred to the way in which rural administration is being carried on by groups of villages. In those groups how many are really literate?

*Lord Zetland:* Very few.

*Mr. K. T. Paul:* Very few are really literate. Literacy is not necessary. They have a horse sense which enables them to discern the importance of the subjects which come before them, and therefore, they are able to administer their own affairs. Personally I want to give a testimony here. I happen to be president of a bank which is charged with the responsibility of financing rural agricultural co-operative societies which are organised especially for those who have no property to pledge, and who can only hypothecate their crops. Last year we financed nearly 3,000 such rural societies and we had a turnover of 200 lakhs of rupees. That means 20 million rupees. In the 15 years of business of this sort we have been able to pay 9 per cent. dividend to our shareholders. It shows that those villagers who are almost 90 per cent. illiterate are able to manage their financial affairs in such a way that the shareholders of the financing bank are able to receive that large dividend.



I want to make another point which may be staggering to some of my friends here who have dealt with the co-operative movement. I want to make this staggering statement that the percentage of overdues in regard to our societies among these illiterate people is smaller than the percentage of overdues in the whole Presidency where almost all other societies are among literate people.

Therefore, in building up a democracy, let us realise that in India we have to devise a means which is totally irrespective of literacy or illiteracy.

Certain practical difficulties have been mentioned. In the first place, I want to point out that the common man in India, the agricultural worker with whom I have come in large contact, is all the time forming more and more the habit of organisation. In every province we have the Village Self-Government Act; village arbitration courts are at work, and other things are being done which are training our people in the habit of getting together and working in concert to administer their affairs.

Another difficulty which has been mentioned is the practical problem of getting these people to the polling stations. It is true that at certain parts of the year large portions of the country are flooded, but this flooding occurs only as a rule in certain seasons. There is no reason why the polling should always be fixed during the season of the monsoon. All that is required is a little common-sense and organisation. Moreover, as to the long distances which our people have to go in order to vote, are they not habituated to going long distances on festivals and pilgrimages and on other occasions? After all, we only have these elections once in five years.

Then there is the question of getting them to make marks on the voting papers. But let us remember how many thousands of co-operative societies are being organised to-day, societies are being organised to-day, societies in which people handle their own money, lending it and collecting it, and here let me say that I have found the women in these village societies as efficient in these matters as the men.

The whole idea of comparing our country and our people with other countries and other people is very fallacious. It is for our country that we have to build up a franchise and organisation suited to ourselves.

One more point. Even the Simon Commission Report suggests an immediate increase of the franchise to four-fold its present size. They want to increase it from 2.8 per cent. to 10 per cent. of the total population. Sir John Simon apparently is not afraid of increasing the number of voters four-fold, and he says that instructions should be given to increase it within a short time to 20 per cent. of the adult population. Mr. Joshi wants 100 per cent. We come down to consider as practical men what instruction we should lay down as a point of procedure that would work. Are we to say 100 per cent., or 50 per cent., or 20 per cent. I want to make this



point finally that we ought not to be afraid of this proposal. No valid argument has been urged against the mental or moral qualities of the man whom it is proposed to enfranchise. The only arguments have related to questions of practicability and organisation. I therefore would urge that we do this thing courageously.

*(The sub-Committee adjourned at 5-10 p.m.)*

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND MEETING OF SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI  
(FRANCHISE) HELD ON 22ND DECEMBER, 1930.

*Chairman:* Ladies and gentlemen, I have had circulated for your convenience two tables. One shows the composition of the present Provincial Legislatures, showing you in various columns how many of the members are nominated, how many are elected by general constituencies and how many are elected by special constituencies. It may be convenient for you to have that before you. The second table shows the population of the various Provinces and the number of voters, both male and female. That also, I think, may be convenient.

*Mrs. Subbarayan:* My colleague Begum Shah Nawaz and I desire most earnestly to support the broadening of the franchise in India. We believe a State should reflect the views and aims of all sections of its people, and we cannot have a really peaceful and contented India without this. We believe also, Sir, that democracy makes most for the happiness of the people.

I was surprised to hear one of the Delegates remark the other day that democracy had failed in the West. I cannot understand how anyone, reviewing the great democracies of the West, can make that statement. Surely history teaches us the great danger of denying democracy to any nation, and the violent reaction which may follow the withholding of it. Moreover, I would ask the members of this sub-Committee to consider the spirit which is abroad in India to-day. It is the modern spirit; it is not the spirit of 1832, and it will not accept a narrow franchise. It is no use to-day to say to the modern generation in India that they are better off than was England in 1832. In the last hundred years the world has advanced much more rapidly than it did in the preceding thousand, and we cannot seriously compare the development of political thought to-day with that of 1832.

It was also remarked that government should be in the hands of those who can act with a sense of responsibility; but I should like to reply that it is not only those who have property who act with a sense of responsibility. Civic spirit is not peculiar to those who pay a rental of Rs. 10 and over. We cannot accept such a contention, and we strongly support the proposal for adult franchise as being the method best adapted for reflecting the views and aims of all sections of the people.



Mr. Chairman, my colleague and I are keenly interested in the political future of the country, and we are particularly concerned with the political future and welfare of a great section which represents nearly half the population of India. We want the women of India to bear their full share of responsibility in the new India. As the Simon Commission states, the women's movement in India holds the key of progress, and the results it may achieve are incalculably great. We feel, Sir, that the first few years of India under the new constitution will be of immense importance in the shaping of her whole future policy; and we think it is essential that the views of women should play their due part in politics in these years.

Sir, we have circulated among the members of this sub-Committee a memorandum\* outlining the case regarding the political status of women under the new constitution, and in it we particularly draw attention to the drawbacks in the present women's franchise in India. Women's franchise has already been accepted in principle in India, and I should like here to pay a tribute to the Legislatures of the past in India, which took advantage of the permission granted to them by the last Reforms and accorded the franchise to women. We shall always be grateful to them for that, because the recognition of the principle means much.

What we are asking now is that the practice also should be considered, and the franchise broadened so that the women's vote, which is now a negligible quantity, will become a real factor. We have been reminded in this sub-Committee that women now have equal franchise with men, but that is true only so far as the qualification is concerned. The present franchise, given on equal terms to men and women, and based mainly on property, produces a very great discrepancy between them in voting strength, for the simple reason that only a very small number of women have the property qualifications. For instance, take the case of the Bombay Presidency, where the lowest qualification for an elector is the Rs. 10 rental, which has already been quoted by one speaker. In this Presidency there are 759,000 male voters and only 39,000 women voters; consequently, there are nearly 20 men electors for every woman elector. The proportion of men electors to the adult male population is 13.4 per cent., while the proportion of female electors to the adult female population is 0.8 per cent. Again, take the six Provinces of India, excluding Burma, where women have the vote and for which we have statistics. In these six Provinces the actual number of male electors is 5,833,000, while the women number 268,000. In other words, in these six Provinces there are nearly 22 men electors for every woman elector. While the proportion of men voters to the adult male population is 12.2 per cent., the proportion of women electors to the adult female population is 0.6 per cent.

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\* See page 290.



When women are in such a minority, it is obvious that their political views are at present of little or no account; and, as we claim that women have a special contribution to make to the welfare of the nation, it seems only just and reasonable that the voting strength of women should be brought up to that of men.

As to the best method of securing this, I expect that will be more fully considered when this Sub-Committee leaves the general principles and goes into details. Our hope is that this Sub-Committee will approve of the principle of adult franchise, which, as I said before, seems to me the best method of adjusting the views and aims of all sections of the people in India. If, however, adult franchise cannot be immediately introduced—

*Mr. Joshi*: It can be.

*Mrs. Subbarayan*: That remains to be seen. If it cannot be immediately introduced, or can be achieved only by stages, we are prepared to put forward suggestions for a special franchise for women, to bring their voting strength up to that of men; but, as I have already said, we shall reserve such proposals until a later stage.

Before I conclude, may I say we feel some alarm at the magnitude of our task in presenting the claims of women to this Conference; for, while the women of India represent nearly half the total population of India, the women in the Conference represent only one forty-fourth of the membership of the Conference and only one-eighteenth of the membership of this Sub-Committee. But we believe that if we ask you and this Sub-Committee to remember our numerical inferiority at this Conference and to share with us this responsibility, the claims of women will not go unrecognised.

We have already felt greatly encouraged in our task by the appreciation which some of the Delegates have expressed of the work, political and social, which the women of India have been doing. I hope the Sub-Committee will realise that the women of India are waiting to take their place beside the men in the building up of the new India. They, too, like the men, demand their rights and responsibilities; they too are anxious to serve India; but first of all full opportunity should be given them, and now we ask for that opportunity.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: It seems to me that there are only two important questions which this Round Table Conference is going to consider. One question is whether India should have responsible government, and the second question is to what people that government should be responsible.

In the Plenary sessions we all joined in one chorus in demanding that India should have a responsible form of government, and I for one, speaking on behalf of the Depressed Classes in that Plenary session, joined with my friends sitting opposite in demanding responsible government for India. When I did so, however, I was under the impression that the Indian people who came to represent their country at this Round Table Conference were not



only united in making a demand for responsible government for India, but were also united in the view as to whom that government should be responsible.

I am sorry to say, Sir, that I have been deluded. I find now that although some of our people would desire me and others to join them in their demand for Dominion Status, they do not join with us in demanding that the Government which will be set up under that Dominion Status shall be responsible to the people of India as a whole. I never thought there would be this division of opinion, and that I should have to stand up to defend the position we take.

Now, Sir, speaking on behalf of the Depressed Classes I cannot honestly consent to responsible government or to Dominion Status unless I can be sure that the people for whom I speak are to have a place in that constitution. I must make that fact plain to all my friends. As an objection has been raised to the proposal for adult suffrage by some of my friends, I propose to deal with the arguments brought forward against it.

One of the arguments brought forward was that we should follow the precedent laid down in this country, that adult suffrage should be reached by stages. It is suggested that we should follow the stages adopted in this country from 1832 to 1918. Those who take their stand on the political history of enfranchisement in this country seem to think that there was some philosophical course of action thought out by the English people in devising the steps that were taken by them in enfranchising the people from 1832 onwards, that they had decided beforehand that they must enfranchise only a limited number of people in 1832, that otherwise it would be philosophically wrong; that they should take the next step only in 1867, and not in 1866; that they should take the next step in 1884 and not in 1867. I do not know whether those who use that argument believe that there was any philosophic belief behind that fact. But I should like to point out to my friends, those who base their arguments upon this fact, that if you read the political history of England, you will find that not only was there no philosophical belief which determined the stages that were taken by the British people, but the question of franchise was treated in this country as a mere matter of party politics: that each party tried to extend the franchise because it thought that as a political catch-word it would influence and augment that party. Perhaps that will be news to my friend who used that argument, and, I must say, always uses it with satisfaction to himself, feeling that he is placing an insuperable obstacle in our path. He will be, perhaps, pleased to find that one of the great steps in the political enfranchisement of the people of England was taken by a Conservative Government in this country, and not by the Liberals or the Radicals.

The second thing I should like to point out to my friend is this. Does he really mean to tell us that because the franchise in this country was limited, that, therefore, the Government produced



under that franchise was a good Government, a Government the object of which was the welfare of the people and the prosperity of the masses? Is that the inference he wants to draw from that fact? That because the franchise was limited, that, therefore, there was no trouble, and that everybody was satisfied in this country? Surely that is not the case. If my friend will only take the trouble of reading the life of Lord Shaftesbury, and the social and political history of England, he will certainly find that the unreformed Parliament was not a blessing to any one.

Thirdly, I should like to point out to my friend, if he really is serious, and if he really believes what he says, that the people of India ought not to be given adult suffrage, because they are not fit for it, that the only alternative for him is to go back to India and not to demand Dominion Status or responsible government, for, surely, if it is the view of the gentleman who puts forward this case that the Indian people are not fit to exercise the franchise, are not fit to take upon themselves the responsibilities of government, then I do not understand in whose name he asks for responsible government. Is it for this class? Is it for himself? For whom is it? The only argument, as I understand, in favour of responsible government and in favour of Dominion Status, is the assumption which must constitute the basis of any such argument, that the people of India are fit to undertake the responsibility of government. If my friend does not believe that the Indian people are capable of exercising that responsibility, then the only conclusion is that the Indian people cannot have Dominion Status and cannot have responsibility.

The second argument that was brought forward was, that, although adult suffrage may be an ideal, it cannot be brought into effect at the present moment, because we have not the machinery to give effect to it. Now I have great sympathy with that argument, but I should like to point out that there are considerations in opposition to that view. Let us understand what the franchise does really mean. Surely the franchise does not mean a mere matter of the ballot box, does not mean a mere matter of polling booths and the placing of polling officers there. The franchise means something more vital than that. Now, Sir, as I understand it, to me the suffrage and the franchise are nothing else but the right of self-defence; it means that you will create a legislature which will have the amplest power of passing laws which will affect the life, liberty and property of the people. Surely, if that is going to be the position, if your legislature is going to have that power of affecting your life in these most vital matters, then surely every individual who is going to be subject to that legislation ought to have the power to defend himself against laws which will probably in the circumstances invade his liberty, invade his life and his property. It is not a mere question of the ballot box; it is not a mere question of polling booths.

May I put it in a different way. If I understand the franchise, I understand it to be the right to regulate the terms of what one



might call associated life in society; that is the essence of the franchise. When you give a man the franchise, what you mean is that you give him power to regulate the terms on which he will live in relationship with other individuals in society. Now, if that is the meaning of the suffrage, surely you cannot give the higher classes, the intellectuals as they are called, or the propertied classes, the power so to regulate the terms of associated life, and leave the lower classes at their mercy. They, too, must have the power to regulate the terms of associated life. Just as the capitalist must have the power, if he is to have any constitution, to dictate how he shall live on terms of associated life with the labourer, surely the labourer is entitled also to have the power to regulate the terms on which he shall live with his capitalist master. It cannot be a one-sided bargain; it must not be a one-sided bargain. If you understand the franchise in the right sense of the word, then it seems to me the franchise is something which must be regarded as the inherent right of every individual in the State; and if you understand that the franchise is the inherent right of every man or woman who is capable of understanding it, then surely you cannot make an inherent right of a people dependent upon the conveniences of your administration. My friend used that argument, that we must not have adult suffrage because we shall not have polling booths and polling officers. I should like to remind him of what would be the situation if he were told that he had been wronged by an individual, that he had a good case which, if he brought it to the Court would certainly succeed, but that he could not be given redress because we had not sufficient judges in the High Court. How would he like that position? Surely, if the franchise is an inherent right, and if there are administrative difficulties in the effectuation of that franchise, then the remedy is not to curtail the franchise, but the remedy is to provide the necessary machinery, so that every man or woman capable of enjoying that franchise shall be in a position to give effect to it.

Sir, it seems to me that the difficulties of administering the franchise which have been placed before us arise from two different sources. We are told that the constituencies in India are very vast; and, surely, as we see from the Report of the Simon Commission, they are of a most fabulous character. It is said that if you increase the number of electors in the existing constituencies, as they exist to-day, the whole machinery will break down. My submission to this Conference is this: Surely this difficulty can easily be met. It seems to me this difficulty can be met in this way. It seems to me that the difficulty arises largely because of the composition and strength of your Legislative Councils to-day; that composition is so very limited that you cannot help having the large constituencies that you have to-day. It seems to me that from the standpoint of numbers the existing strength of the legislatures in the Provinces is ridiculous. Let us have the figures for a moment before our mind's eye. I find on comparison that Madras, Bengal and the United Provinces have more or less the same popula-



tion as France, Great Britain and Italy. The Madras Legislative Council consists of 132 members; the Bengal Legislative Council consists of 140 members; the United Provinces Legislative Council consists of 123 members. On the other hand, France has a Lower Chamber which consists of 626 members; Great Britain has somewhere over 600, and Italy has 560 members. Take, on the other hand, Bombay and the Punjab, which are more or less on a par in the matter of population. Bombay has 114 members; the Punjab has 94. Bombay and the Punjab are more or less equal in population to Spain; if you take the Lower Chamber in Spain, you find it consists of 417 members. I know it is not in existence now, but that is another matter. It is a matter of constitution. In France it is in existence with a large number. Then take the Central Provinces in which the Legislative Council has 73 members. I find that the population of the Central Provinces is equal to that of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia has 313 members. Assam has 53 members; in population it is equal to Portugal, and Portugal has 146 members.

Now surely if you are going to cramp these vast aggregations of people into Legislative Councils which do not exceed 140 in membership, you are bound, as a result, to have very large constituencies. Why are you afraid of increasing the numbers in the Legislature? I cannot understand it. If you are not afraid, and if you follow the parallels in other countries, then surely you can very easily reduce the size of the electorates, and thereby remove one of the difficulties that is said to exist in the matter of adult suffrage.

Then another difficulty which was pointed out was that it was said we should not have a sufficient number of polling officers. Now that difficulty to my mind also does not seem to be of a very serious character. It seems to me that if all the college students in India could be drafted into the service of the electoral department, this difficulty could be very easily solved. Some of my friends on the other side laugh at it, but I do not know why. I know, as a matter of fact, that in the census all college students, and school-boys also, help the census department in carrying on the enumeration. If, for instance, the same system were adopted on the polling day, if all the college students were asked to help in this matter—and I have not the slightest doubt that they would come to the rescue of the department—then surely we should have more polling officers than we need on the occasions of this sort.

It seems to me, therefore, that the difficulties of the situation are not insuperable. Let me point this out to my friends opposite who object to adult suffrage on this ground. It seems to me their position is of a somewhat curious character. Where a member of the British Delegation raises a difficulty, and says there are heaps of difficulties in the way of India, and, therefore, India must not have Dominion Status or responsible government, the gentlemen sitting opposite would not allow the English gentleman to take advantage of the difficulties; they would tell him at once: "Why, you bolster up difficulties to put down our claims. These are diffi-



culties which surely can be met." Let me tell him that we on this side are also not prepared to allow you to take advantage of this difficulty. We say that if there are difficulties in the way of getting the power in our hands, those difficulties ought to be solved. We are not going to let you have the advantage of the situation.

Sir, so far I have dealt with the arguments which have been presented against adult suffrage. Now let me put one or two arguments which I think are in favour of adult suffrage, and which, in my opinion, are more or less decisive. The first argument that I will put is this, that you cannot have in India any system of suffrage short of adult suffrage which will give equality of representation to all the castes and communities in India; there is no other system you can devise for India which will give that result. Take, for instance, the existence of constituencies. In Bengal and in the Punjab the Muhammadans form a majority of the population. You have in Sind also, as apart from Bombay, the Muhammadans in a majority. Now what is the state of the Muhammadan communities in these Provinces? I am putting this as a feeler: my Muhammadan friends may take their stand apart from this; I am putting it as a case. What is the position of the Muhammadan communities in these Provinces under the system of franchise that we have to-day. The Muhammadans in Sind form something like 70 per cent. of the population; and yet, if I am not very much mistaken, their voting strength is only 49 per cent. Take, for instance, again Bengal and the Punjab; there again the Muhammadans predominate in population, and yet in the voting list they are in the minority. Take again the depressed classes; under the existing franchise they are nowhere at all in the electorate. I think it is a most disgraceful thing to have a franchise of this sort. You have to remember one thing: that Indian society is composed of so many castes and creeds and those castes and creeds are not related to each other in what one might call the vertical perpendicular, so that if you chop off this mass at any particular point you get a part which is representative of all the communities in an equal degree. On the other hand, if I may put it so, they are related in such a manner that the parallel grains are, so to speak, placed horizontally one on the other, so that if you chop at any particular point you get a part which is representative of one single community only or at the most two, and the rest are not represented at all. Now surely you do not want to create a system of political government in which only some castes and some communities will predominate. Surely you do not want to create in India a South Africa, where only some people will have the vote and the rest will not. I say, if you are interested in giving every man a vote, in giving every man the political franchise, so that he may work out his destiny, then you cannot have any other system of franchise in India than that of adult suffrage.

Now let me give you another example. As I say, I am not opposed to female suffrage, and I am very much obliged to our lady colleague, Mrs. Subbarayan, for supporting us in this matter.



I will go with her whole-heartedly. Let me point out one or two illustrations of what has been suggested by way of enlarging and broadening the franchise. It is suggested that there should be a franchise of literacy. I do not propose to call it a fancy franchise, but let me tell you what will be the effect of it. The effect of it would be this: that some communities would have their voting strength almost doubled, while other communities would stand where they are. Literacy in India is so unevenly distributed, that some communities would have all the increase of the franchise added to their stock, while other communities would remain where they are. Surely you do not want to create that sort of situation.

Therefore my submission is, that if this Conference and the members who are assembled round this table are true to their creed, believe that India must have responsible government, and that Government must be responsible to the people, then I submit there is no alternative to adult suffrage.

Then, Sir, there is one more consideration that I would like to point out, that seems to me to be a most decisive consideration in this matter. We all of us know that the question of joint versus separate electorates is a most thorny question; it seems to me to be a very crucial question. May I point out to this Conference that, at least in my opinion, the question of joint versus separate electorates is inextricably bound up with the question of franchise. You will not ask any minority in India, you will not compel any minority in India, and you will not get the consent of any minority in India, to agree to joint electorates unless that minority has adult suffrage. I am not going to place myself under the thumb and authority of any majority government, unless I am certain that I can exercise in the elections electoral power which is commensurate with my social power. Unless I know that every man and every woman in the depressed class community will be able to exercise the vote and to determine the destiny of the candidate who is going to represent the mass of people in the country, I certainly am not going to consent to joint electorates; certainly not. I am not going to place myself in a minority position; I am not going to allow the majority to select my candidate. No, under no circumstances. And I think what is true of my minority may also be true of the Muhammadans. I do not wish to say something that I shall have to say in another Committee, but the point is so relevant that I cannot help making a reference. You cannot in fairness ask the Muhammadans of Bengal or the Punjab to accept joint electorates unless you place them in a majority in the electorate. You cannot deny the franchise to the Muhammadans, make a minority of them in the electoral power, and then say, "Come along and have a joint electorate."

The decisiveness of this fact was acknowledged by the Nehru Committee and by three members of the Indian Central Committee.

Let me, before I conclude, make one or two remarks to my friends who will not give us adult suffrage. I made it plain at the beginning of my speech that we make the question of the grant



of responsible government to India not entirely dependent on this question. Although I know that my friend and I are only two in a Conference of 80 or 90, we represent 43 millions of people.

*Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* Would Dr. Ambedkar accept the proposal of Lord Zetland?

*Dr. Ambedkar:* We might accept the principle. But may I say that I am receiving hundreds of letters and telegrams on the subject I have brought forward. It is a crucial thing.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* What about the Central Legislature? Does he want adult suffrage, and what size does he want the Legislature to be?

*Dr. Ambedkar:* That will be a question to be decided later on. The Central Legislature, I think, ought to consist of 500 members.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* And adult suffrage also?

*Dr. Ambedkar:* Yes.

*Lt.-Colonel Gidney:* In my opinion no successful advance in responsible government is possible unless we evolve a franchise that will offer adequate representation to all interests in the country—I mean by that a franchise that will provide electorates capable of exercising a real freedom of choice upon a discrimination between policies rather than a preference of individuals. In other words, the interests of India and not of the representatives must be first considered. Before this meeting we have heard many speeches advocating various forms of franchise. We had Mr. Joshi the other day, and this morning we have had our lady colleague, Mrs. Subbarayan, and just now we have had Dr. Ambedkar advocating adult suffrage. They have made out a good case for adult suffrage, but in my opinion it is only an ideal. They have failed, I believe, to meet the practical, the administrative, and the financial difficulties involved in such a sudden departure. All the other speakers have opposed adult suffrage. It has been opposed also in the Indian Statutory Commission's Report, and the only body that has favoured it was the Nehru Committee, which, I think, is more or less out of date to-day.

I admit that adult suffrage is an ideal, and that it is the only way to give India true democracy. But is India ready for it, and would it be really to her advantage if it were introduced at once? In my humble opinion India is not fit for adult suffrage, and to give it would be not only impracticable but dangerous.

It is true that adult suffrage has certain advantages. For instance, it would solve the present Hindu-Muslim problem, especially in the Provinces of Bengal and the Punjab. It would render unnecessary electoral qualifications such as property-holding, taxation, or educational qualifications. It would give equality of political status to men and women. It would help to secure adequate representation of the depressed classes which does not exist to-day. It would afford adequate representation to rural India and its dumb millions of labourers. These are certainly very weighty



factors, and the ideals of true democracy which, if adopted, would solve many communal difficulties. But the question we have to face is whether its immediate adoption is either practicable or necessary. Apart from the dangers involved in a free vote to all adults, which recent world history has proved to be generally the harbinger of unrest, the granting of adult suffrage would end in a majority Hindu rule or hegemony which none of the other communities would at present permit. Further, it would seriously imperil the safety of all minorities. Indeed, it would spell their economic and social ruin, lead India to unrest, chaos, and strife, and hasten the day of autocracy or the rule of the majority. Mr. Joshi stressed the practice of bribery and corruption resorted to in securing votes in villages under the present system of franchise, and added that, if adult suffrage were given, this would largely cease. I entertain an opposite view, for I believe such malpractices would not only be further encouraged but would become rampant. Then again surely Mr. Joshi, as a Labour representative, is fully aware of the enormous amount of illiteracy and indebtedness that exists to-day among the poorer labouring classes of India (90 per cent. of whom, mainly Muslims, suffer from this economic canker). I feel sure that he will not deny that this is not suitable soil in which to sow the seed of adult suffrage. Moreover, has Mr. Joshi considered the vast administrative machinery that would be required or the enormous expenditure involved in working an electorate of over 100 million voters if adult suffrage were given? Why, a large portion of India's revenue would be exhausted in such an effort, and it would only result in a complete breakdown of the machinery.

At the same time I am prepared to admit that we must make a beginning to-day if India is to achieve adult suffrage in the years to come, and this can only be done by broadening the franchise. But the question before us is to what extent this can safely be done.

In considering this it may not be out of place to note what effect any broadening of the franchise will have on the size of the Legislative Councils. It is obvious, if the franchise is broadened, the number of constituencies will *ipso facto* be increased, which would mean larger legislative councils in all the Provinces. In this connection it is generally recognised that our present constituencies are so enormous, scattered and inaccessible as to render them wholly unwieldy, so much so that it is impossible for any member to get into personal touch with his electors. For instance, take the Anglo-Indian community. Owing to their peculiar setting, they are scattered in coteries all over India. In Bengal there is only one constituency which embraces the entire Province. Can you imagine what it means in time, money and labour for any candidate to get into personal touch with his constituency? We must therefore obviously reduce the size of our present constituencies which again must increase the size of our Councils. It will thus be seen that both these measures, i.e., the widening of the franchise with the resultant creation of new constituencies, as also



the splitting up of our present constituencies into smaller ones, will operate in almost doubling the strength of our present Legislative Councils. This, however, is inevitable, and not in itself undesirable, within limits.

Let me now refer to the opinions submitted in this matter. The Indian Statutory Commission Report recommends an immediate broadening of the franchise to 10 per cent. of the total population, and an increase, for the present, of the membership of the more important Provincial Councils to 200 or 250, and further recommends that after 10 years Provincial Councils should have power to set in train proposals for extending the franchise and after 15 years a second Franchise Committee should be appointed to review the progress made, so that in time India will have achieved adult suffrage. These proposals are, in the main, supported by the various Provincial Governments and the Government of India's recent despatch. To a certain extent, I support the Indian Statutory Commission's report on these points. I submit that the incessant and increasing demand for self-government (some demand it immediately) shows that the political conscience and soul of Indians has awakened and this Committee must make up its mind whether India is to be given this; and if not to-day—when? She cannot be put off any longer. It is no use dilly-dallying and shilly-shallying with the matter. I submit that if India is to be given self-government (and the tide of her political aspirations cannot be stemmed), then the franchise must be enlarged so that her people, especially those in the villages, will be politically educated.

There is, of course, another school of thought, represented by my esteemed friend, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, who in his speech at our first sitting objected to any broadening of the franchise. I must confess I have no sympathy with this view. I have always looked upon Sir Cowasji Jehangir as an ultra-Liberal. He has now shown himself in his true colours—the colours of a Bombay merchant prince. With one breath he demands immediate full self-government for India. With the next he stoutly objects to any extension of the present franchise or enlargement of the Councils and proclaims that, "Government should be administered by responsible people"—meaning no doubt the constitutional reform "wallah"—the intelligentsia of India. May be his political perimeter is confined to the environs of the City of Bombay only. His idea is that the poor ignorant villager, cultivator and artisan classes must be made to pay their taxes, but they must have no voice whatever in the expenditure of that money or the administration of their own country, unless and until they pay Rs. 10, as in Bombay City, per mensem as house rent; or become graduates, barristers, mill-owners or, perhaps, members of the Liberal Party. Sir Cowasji Jehangir has revealed himself in his true colours—that of a financial magnate—one out to protect the rich man and the intelligentsia only. What a valuable asset he would make to the Beaverbrook-Rothermere clan. A Liberal forsooth. Why, he has proved himself a Tory of Tories. In his



insatiable desire to secure more power for the Liberals, or the intelligentsia of the country, he never fails to seize an opportunity to criticise the bureaucratic government of which he was once an Executive Councillor. But he is not prepared to share that power with the Labour Party in India.

In a country like India, with its divergent castes and creeds, it is impossible to evolve any scheme for a common franchise or electorate and to obtain any practical measure of homogeneity, but I submit that whatever decision this Committee arrives at in connection with the franchise and legislative councils, it cannot and must not fail to consider certain vital points.

(a) There must be a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question, without which all our labours, especially on this Franchise Committee, will be barren of result.

(b) There must be due provision for the safeguarding of the economic and political interests of all minorities, and of special classes and interests, however small these may be.

(c) There must be no difference whatever in the status of men and women. They must be given equal political rights. I consider the world in general and India in particular has neglected its womenfolk and their great power for good, with the result that we are witnessing the reaction to-day. Look at the lightning speed with which Indian women are awakening to a proper sense of their power and position. Are we going to thwart this, or are we going to encourage it in a substantial way? I say we must give woman her rightful place in the body politic of our Motherland—India.

(d) There must be a clear recognition of the impossibility of securing definitely the same proportion of voters to population with each community, and at the same time for all communities to enjoy the same franchise qualifications.

(e) There must be a genuine and effective representation of rural and labour interests in both electorate and elected. This is all the more necessary in the new Constitution in view of the almost unanimous desire shared even by the Indian Statutory Commission and the Government of India that the official bloc should be abolished. There is no doubt that in the present legislature the official member from the mofussil represents the view-points and needs of the millions of dumb villagers.

In our present Councils, Labour is inadequately represented. The entire attitude of the present Government, especially in the Labour and Railway Departments, has been and is against the development of Labour organisations and Trade Unions, and we have to-day seen that the Liberals in India are against giving them adequate representation or a share in the Government. One hopes that the present Royal Commission on Labour will remedy this, but I submit with all the emphasis at my command that this Committee must give its most serious consideration to the



special interests of labour in India and afford it adequate representation. Government is the biggest employer of labour in India. On the railways alone it employs nearly one million, and Government must, therefore, make adequate franchise provision for its employees if self-government is not to degenerate into misgovernment. It is vitally necessary that the workman should be given a vote and be represented by one of his own class in the Provincial Council, so that his particular interests may be adequately impressed upon the Council. Up to now the chief function of the Government has been the protection of the labourer. Now that the Government is relinquishing its power of intervention between the rich and the poor, it would be criminal folly for it to abdicate without providing the poor and the weak with some effective means of protecting themselves—not so much an “instrument of political education” as a very necessary weapon of defence. Again, take the Anglo-Indian community. It has an economic importance in India out of all proportion to its population, mainly because it is cent. per cent. educated and has beyond any doubt demonstrated its superior value in the way of aptitude for certain forms of employment. If its franchise and representation on the Councils are to be calculated on its population it would receive very little consideration, and yet its claims must be considered and it must be given adequate representation. The same remarks apply to the special interests of other minority communities—the Europeans in respect of their commercial and industrial stake in the country, the depressed classes with a view to elevating them to an equal position with other communities, the Indian Christians to afford them adequate employment, etc.

As regards the other points raised in the terms of reference, I should like to state that in my opinion it would not be possible to operate the same franchise qualifications for all communities in the same area. For instance, take the Anglo-Indian community with which I am most familiar. It is cent. per cent. educated and at least 80 per cent. of them have undergone military training and service, but very few indeed possess property.

I consider that military service should be accepted as a qualification for franchise. By military service I mean service in both the British and Indian Armies and the second lines of defence attached to each Army, namely the Indian Auxiliary Force and the Indian Territorial Force. I do not think that beyond what I have already indicated there is any need whatever for further special qualifications to be prescribed for women.

But I am certainly opposed to the proposals of the Indian Statutory Commission regarding the two new qualifications for women voters. I see no reason why the qualification of a woman voter should be dependent on the property of her husband, whether dead or alive. I am opposed to plural voting. Having been a member of the Legislative Assembly since its inception, and having helped in many electioneering campaigns for Provincial Councils, it is my belief that the present system of con-



ducting elections leaves much to be desired. It seems to me that Provincial Governments conduct elections to suit the convenience of their officers and not of the voters. There is not a sufficient number of polling booths and they are too widely scattered. This was the experience during one of the recent elections in Bengal.

Another point I desire to stress concerns the difficulty felt at election times by certain communities employed on utility services. Elections extend over one day only, whereas every day a large percentage of the voters are employed on the railways and thus unable to record their votes. I consider that polling should be allowed on two days instead of one.

I am of opinion that each Provincial Legislature should be given complete power to alter the franchise at any time after it begins to operate, and here I should like to mention a certain fact that exists in India with regard to our Legislatures. There are rules, called the Government Servants' Conduct Rules, which give power to vote but prevent electors from consulting the members whom they have elected. This is peculiar to India because our urban electorates consist mainly of Government servants, a position which does not obtain in any other part of the Empire. Some modification seems to be called for here.

The question is, how are we to effect this broadening of the franchise, and to what extent? I understand that the total voters in all electorates in India to-day are about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions, of which only about 50 per cent. have exercised the vote. I also understand the total number of educated people is about 11 millions. I believe that the total male and female adult population of British India is about 100 millions. Of this,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions already enjoy a vote. The Indian Statutory Commission Report recommends the enfranchisement of about 10 per cent. of the total population, that is, a total electorate of about 10 millions, which means an addition of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions to the present total. If we are to accept this 10 per cent. as a standard, we must devise a means by which this increase can be effected. How and from where are we to provide for this? Let us first ask ourselves two very important questions. Are we satisfied that our rural areas and the interests of our women are adequately represented by the present franchise? If not, can we look to these two fields for recruiting this additional  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million voters? I am personally convinced that up till now rural interests have been neglected and that the labourer has not been heard in our Legislative Councils, nor have we given our women a chance to show their worth. Indeed, one generally finds rural constituencies represented by pleader politicians who have, by divers means, qualified themselves for election in some particular rural area, and I need hardly add that the ryots rarely receive any real benefits by such representation.

My friend Sir P. C. Mitter advocated a separation of rural from urban constituencies and suggested the increase of rural constituencies by 25 per cent.



The Marquess of Zetland also advocated a more liberal franchise in rural areas, and with a view to affording a vote to every village in India he detailed a group scheme of representation called "Mukhi" (*i.e.*, Headman), in which one vote is given to every 20 villagers who select or elect their man, who in his vote represents the views of 20 individuals—I think he included women in this?—of that particular village. These coteries of 20 villagers with one vote would, I take it, form constituencies and elect their representatives. If we divide the total adult population of India—100 millions—by 20, we get an electorate of 5 millions, and this, added to the  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million voters we have already, would give a total of  $11\frac{1}{2}$  million voters, or about 10 per cent. of the total adult population, as recommended by the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, and generally accepted by the Provincial Governments in their official reports.

The noble Marquess desires that the existing franchise of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions should remain and continue to operate, and that alongside it the "Mukhi" system should be introduced. In this manner he hopes to enfranchise the uneducated villagers, who are the main supporters of the country, and thus give to India, but on a contracted scale, a form of adult suffrage in which all would have a voice, direct or indirect.

I should like to state there that the solution is not to be found in a docile imitation of the Western system of indirect election. Our present individual franchise of the literate voter should not be altered or restricted. It supplies the literate individual with a vote. But we must provide the illiterate masses with a vote, and this can best be done, in my opinion, by group representation. If we gave the 100 million illiterates a vote the machinery would break down, but if we divide this number by 20 in the way suggested by the noble Marquess we should have 5 million additional voters. This scheme should be worked out in detail, it being left to the villagers to form their own groups, and a register kept of selected spokesmen, who would vote by ballot at the polling stations, as at the present elections. A similar system might be followed in towns, with their floating populations. These groups should, however, form constituencies entirely separate from the ordinary territorial constituencies.

It might be a good thing to extend this group representation throughout the electorates. Its greatest value would be its immediate application; the masses would not have to wait—as advocated in the Simon Report—for a piecemeal extension of the franchise. But there is one proviso. This system, this increased franchise, must result in a genuine representation of the masses by their own men. I believe—and I think you will agree with me—that the Franchise Act of 1919 catered more for the urban electorate than for the rural electorate. The India of to-day will not tolerate this any longer.

I was certainly much impressed by the valuable advice and warning given to us by my friend Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam



as to the potential dangers attached to giving more power to the headmen of villages. He certainly speaks with great authority and with personal experience. We also know how deeply indebted the ordinary ryot is to the moneyed classes whose agents are to be found like pestilential flies in all Indian villages. Sir Cowasji Jehangir has remarked on their ignorance and lack of any political sense, while Dr. Paul, on the other hand, has shown us by his startling figures what useful citizens these villagers are and how successfully they have administered their co-operative banks. I agree with Sir Cowasji Jehangir that literacy and franchise are inseparably linked, but by literacy I do not mean what he does—academic education, the ability to make speeches—nor would I agree with the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission and other Government reports, which demand of a voter an educational qualification ranging from the fifth standard to matriculation. I submit that a tiller of the soil or a labourer has the benefit of a vocational training and education and is just as useful and intelligent a citizen as a graduate, and perhaps more so. Had Mr. Joshi based his broadened franchise on a lower level than adult suffrage, and, as a true Labour Member, asked that a vocational training or a minimum monthly salary of, say, Rs. 20 should be accepted as a qualification for a vote, I should have supported him. Indeed, I present this for the favourable consideration of the sub-Committee.

As regards women, I leave the details to the special Franchise Committee which, I take it, will soon be appointed to visit India and report on the franchise as a whole. I consider, however, that the new constitution for India should, at the very outset, provide special measures by which a certain proportion of seats in the various Legislatures shall be reserved for women, and that it should be embodied in the Statute that sex should be no disqualification. Incidentally, I should like to say how very much I have been struck with the very able memorandum submitted by our two lady delegates and colleagues on the demands for women. In congratulating them on their very reasonable and justifiable statement of their case, I desire to assure them of my entire support.

The question is whether we are prepared to leave the present franchise of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions as it is and recommend an additional 5 millions to be recruited mainly from rural areas and women, and if so whether we agree to separate rural from urban constituencies and create separate constituencies for women. This, I believe, will be the simplest and most satisfactory procedure, and I submit it to the sub-Committee for their consideration.

I have some doubts as to the practicability of the scheme put forward by the Marquess of Zetland, for it bristles with a number of minor practical difficulties. Villages are often made and unmade within the life of a **Legislative Council**; villagers have a habit of migrating from one place to another; there are many districts in which the adult population seeks seasonal occupation in other districts and Provinces, as for example in the case of the



tea-garden coolies and those who migrate to Burma. I should like to ask what proportion of men and women there would be among these coteries of twenty villagers and their elected spokesmen, how would any undue interference with communal electorates be avoided, and how would these coteries of twenty villagers in a village be separated into different communities? These are some of the practical difficulties involved in such a scheme; but they are not insuperable, and they must be faced. Of course, this sub-Committee may be prepared to seize the scheme as an opportunity for turning the flank of the Hindu-Muslim question by allowing joint or common electorates in rural India, which represents 70 per cent. of India's population, and so in a measure introduce and encourage the growth of nationalism in the electorates, leaving the existing 6½ millions to indulge in communal electorates when and where necessary. These two systems would no doubt in time amalgamate and gradually extend in size until India reaches adult suffrage, when we shall as a great nation work together, learn together, and do great things together.

*Sir P. Sethna:* The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms gave the vote to one-tenth of the adult total male population. Fortunately no speaker has urged that the qualifications should be stiffened and the existing number of voters reduced. We have, however, conflicting views expressed by different speakers as to what should be done in future. Mr. Joshi on the last occasion, and Mrs. Subbarayan and Dr. Ambedkar to-day, have urged, and urged emphatically, the granting of adult franchise. I should have expected, if anyone was going to make such a proposal, that it would come better from Colonel Gidney, who, as he has told us, represents a community in which the percentage of literacy is cent. per cent. Fortunately, he has not done so.

Mr. Joshi's main argument was that although there is a property qualification, and because there is a property qualification, several illiterates do get the vote, whereas some literates are left out; that is his argument for giving the vote to illiterates. Dr. Ambedkar to-day is very strongly of opinion that responsible government cannot be given to the country unless there is adult suffrage. A very pertinent question was put to him from this side of the table, namely whether he thought that adult suffrage was also necessary for the Central Government; and to that his reply was very halting.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* I said yes.

*Sir P. Sethna:* He did not reply by a direct affirmative; his words, which I took down, were "I would like it very much". Then Dr. Ambedkar quoted the instance of this country, and asked us not to repeat the mistakes made here, but to profit by them. May I ask him what the conditions were in the Dominions? In the Dominions the practice has varied from Dominion to Dominion, and adult suffrage was not considered a condition precedent to responsible government, although the percentage of literacy in the Dominions was far greater than it is in India to-day.



There is, of course, the other view, which has been advanced by my friend Sir Cowasji Jehangir. I am afraid Colonel Gidney was very unfair in his attack on him. I think the reason which prompted Sir Cowasji to recommend that the existing franchise should not be altered but should be kept stationary was simply this, that the voter to-day does not exercise his right as intelligently as he might be expected to do. With that view I entirely agree; but at the same time I do not agree with him that therefore the franchise ought not to be extended. I think it ought to be extended, for it is only in that way that political sense will be created amongst the people.

How is the vote exercised here, and how is it exercised in India? In this country elections are fought on party lines, but even here the ordinary voter has hardly the time or the intelligence to think for himself; he is guided very much by the newspaper he reads every day, and it is possibly the editor of the journal he patronises who thinks for him, rather than that he thinks for himself. With us elections are, I may say, carried on on the lines of "for the Government or against the Government;" that is to say although we have political parties, they are not organised very thoroughly with the exception of one party, the National Congress, and because that party is well organised and because it carries on propaganda it does carry many of the seats. In the first elections they stood out, but in the second elections, when Congress did come in, they did capture very many seats. The other parties were not equally successful. It is believed by the masses in India that the Congress is against the Government, while all the other parties are for the Government. That tendency will certainly continue and the Congress will get yet stronger, but that again is no reason why we should not extend the franchise, because if we do that and the Congress representatives make mistakes, as they are bound to do, then in the process of time, after two or three elections, other parties will get stronger and have an equal say in the destinies of the country, as is the case in England.

With the exception of the Nehru Report it has never been recommended that adult suffrage should be granted. Some of the speakers have referred to this matter, but they have omitted to say that even the Nehru Report pointed out clearly that adult suffrage involves serious difficulties. The other bodies have varied in their recommendations. The Simon Commission recommended that 10 per cent. of the total population should have the vote, which means trebling the existing number of voters and also means that 20 per cent. of the adult male population would get the vote. The Government of India supports the extension of the franchise, but leaves it to a Committee to be appointed hereafter. The Provincial Governments also support the extension, but two or three Governments do not want to go to the same length as the Simon Commission. The Governments of Bihar and Orissa and of the United Provinces are against extending the franchise to more than double the present number of voters and Madras definitely says it wants the increase to be very limited.



We may now pass on to the qualifications which exist at present. The present qualifications are residence within the constituency coupled with the payment of land revenue or local taxes in rural areas and municipal taxes in urban areas.

*Mr. Jadhav:* That is not a fact.

*Sir P. Sethna:* You can give the correct facts when you rise to speak. All payers of income-tax have the vote, and all pensioned, retired or discharged officers from the Regular Army.

Now, I for one am not for reducing the qualifications.

The qualifications are low as they are. Thanks to the Secretariat-General they are set out in a table here, which shows all the different qualifications with regard to the payment of land revenue and so on which obtain in the different Provinces. I may mention in passing that the Secretariat has perhaps taken it for granted that Burma is to be separated, since they have not given figures for Burma.

Whilst I say the qualifications ought not to be reduced any further, I certainly attach very great importance to the recommendation made by Lord Zetland, which in my opinion is worth considering. It is a fact that rural areas to-day do not enjoy the franchise to the same extent in every province as do the urban areas, and consequently some further extension might be made there, for India is a land of villages. According to the last Census, there were 685,665 villages throughout India, and in British India 498,527. This means that in British India there are half a million villages roughly, and the population is 221,958,925, or roughly 220 millions. This gives an average of 450 per village. I heard my friend say that the average is much larger in Bengal; it may be so; but I believe that in Bengal and Madras they take them by administrative units rather than by single units. Because these villages contain on an average 450, the system which the noble Marquess has recommended is worthy of consideration, and I hope will be taken up by the Franchise Committee which is to be set up hereafter.

In short, generally, as regards women's suffrage, I am in entire sympathy with the idea of their getting a larger share in the voting than they enjoy at the present moment. According to a further list received this morning from the Secretariat, the proportion of female electors to the adult female population is from 0.2 to 1.0 per cent. That must certainly be regarded as being a very low proportion. It ought to be increased, I agree with Colonel Gidney that not in the manner suggested by the Simon Commission, but some other channels ought to be considered and thought out. While I sympathise with the memorandum which has been submitted by our lady colleagues, I certainly do not agree with one particular in that memorandum. That is in regard to the reservation of seats for them, even though it be for a period of ten to fifteen years, as has been suggested by them.



With these few words, Sir, I submit that the time has not arrived for India to have universal adult suffrage; we must wait. It is true that in England they waited long enough, and it was because they had to wait long that the task of social legislation fell to such men as Lord Shaftesbury and others. Perhaps if they had had adult suffrage earlier in the nineteenth century, social legislation might have been undertaken by the Government themselves, and not at the instance of private individuals.

*Mr. Joshi:* May I ask, Sir, for information, whether the Nehru Report was approved by the Indian National Liberal Party?

*Sir Phiroze Sethna:* It does not follow, that if you approve a report, you approve of it in every single detail.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* There is a history behind that.

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav:* Sir, the speakers who have preceded me have dealt with many of the objections that were raised against universal adult suffrage, a question which was brought before this Committee by Mr. Joshi, member for the labourers. I find, Sir, that there is almost unanimity in conceding that adult suffrage is desirable, that is the goal; but some have doubts whether it will be practicable at the present time. Even the Simon Report has conceded that point, and, as we have seen, the majority in the earlier report. They claim that the franchise should be such as should be very easily manageable. Mr. Joshi, Dr. Ambedkar, and my sister, the lady member, have laid great stress upon adult suffrage, because they realise that only by that method will the communities that they represent have a chance of being represented in the Legislature. You may widen the franchise as much as you like, but it will be difficult to enfranchise the labourer, either in the city or in the rural area. The agricultural labourer has been left wholly outside with reference to getting any influence in the elections; he cannot claim any vote at all; and, however broad your franchise may be, it will be next to impossible to bring him within the purview of that franchise; he will not get a vote. So also the labourer who lives in the city will find it very difficult to come within the qualification that will give him the vote. In the City of Bombay, for instance, it is known to almost everyone there that a large percentage of the labouring population have no room in which to sleep; the majority of them sleep in the street, on the footpaths and other open places. Ten or fifteen labourers come up together, hire a room in which to keep their goods; then one or two sleep there while the others sleep outside. Even if the rental qualification were lowered, only the one of them in whose name the room is rented would get a vote, while the nine or ten or fifteen others would go without a vote. However wide your franchise may be, it will be quite impossible to bring the labourer within its purview. For that purpose, Sir, to give him the vote which is his birthright, some scheme of universal adult franchise will have to be adopted.

In the same way, Sir, at present in the rural areas the franchise is given to all those who hold land paying Rs. 32 or more in



assessment. You may reduce that qualification to Rs. 16 or Rs. 8 or whatever you like, and in that way you may increase the number of voters; but however low the franchise qualification which you adopt may be, you cannot touch the agricultural labourers, whose numbers are very large.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the debate that has been going on for these two years is that those who represent the poorer classes of people are for adult suffrage—

*Mrs. Subbarayan:* And women.

*Mr. Jadhav:* And, of course, those who do not get any vote are for adult suffrage; while those who have got more of the goods of the world are for restricting the vote as far as they can. I was very much obliged to my friend, Sir Phiroze Sethna, in that he did not propose to increase the qualification. One reason is perhaps he has broader sympathies, as he has given his support to the scheme proposed by the noble Marquess, so that I think he is on my side in saying that a scheme of universal adult suffrage should be adopted.

Then, Sir, I would read to this Committee a few lines from the Simon Report about the intentions as stated in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. "The Montagu-Chelmsford Report, in more than one passage, indicated its intention that the franchise for the legislative Councils should be 'broad'. The franchise Committee was to 'measure the number of persons who can in the different parts of the country be reasonably entrusted with the duties of citizenship', and the limitations of the franchise were to be 'determined rather with reference to practical difficulties than to any *a priori* considerations as to the degree of education or amount of income which may be held to constitute a qualification'." This is the principle on which the Franchise Committee of 1920 was formed, and under which the elections are at present carried on.

Then, Sir, the Simon Report further says: "If, then, the number of voters is small as compared with the population, this is not due to any desire to keep the franchise limits high, but to what were felt to be administrative difficulties in the way of spreading it more widely. The system was, for the most part, a novelty: the obstacles created by widespread illiteracy, and the limited number of persons available to act as efficient Returning Officers, had to be considered and were regarded as a warning against any such inordinate and sudden extension of the franchise as might lead to a breakdown of the machinery through sheer weight of numbers." We have had experience for nearly 10 years, and I think we are in a better position to devise ways and means of carrying on elections on a larger scale.

Under the present system only 10 per cent. of the adult male population is enfranchised. There are many defects in the present system. "The adoption of property qualifications as a basis for the franchise gave a predominance and sometimes a monopoly in the vote to certain classes of the population." This is one of the



most serious defects of the present system, and however wide the franchise may be, however much you may lower the franchise qualification, this defect will still remain.

"Thus, though it is true that in an agricultural country like India the bulk of the population appears extremely homogeneous in its needs and aspirations, whole sections of the population came to be excluded from the franchise." In the Province of Sind, Sir, the tenant has not got any hold at all unless he has permanent tenure, and Sind is a Province of big zemindars. The big zemindar has a vote, but the tenant has not got a vote unless he has got permanent tenure. "Chief among these are nearly all the women and the general body of the poor. In exercising the option allowed to them of enfranchising women on the same terms as men, the provincial legislatures have made a gesture of high significance. But so long as the qualification for the vote is almost entirely a property qualification, it will remain a gesture, because India's women do not own property in their own right." That is, unless they have got a husband and sons. I am reading from the Report: "Apart from Burma, the proportion of women voters is almost negligible. The case of the poor is similar. The depressed classes in Madras have 15.5 per cent. of the population ( $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions), but provide only 4.1 per cent. of the electorate; in Bombay, with 8 per cent. of the population, only 2 per cent. of the electorate. In the Central Provinces, the Brahmin and the Bania have, in proportion to their numbers, not less than 100 times as many votes as the Mahar. The urban labourer is often a depressed class man, frequently migratory and always poor, and therefore largely fails to qualify for the vote. Another result of the undiluted property qualification is that the Punjab Land Alienation Act—the Act which precludes members of non-agricultural tribes from ousting members of agricultural tribes from their land—has a discriminatory effect on the enfranchisement of various classes. Again, junior members of undivided Hindu families, however high their standing and education, often have no property and pay no qualifying tax in their own right, and are thus excluded."

Thus it will be seen, Sir, that the widening of the franchise will not meet the case; a large section of people will remain without the vote, and that ought to be prevented as far as possible. "If education be the best test of capacity to use the vote, the present franchise seems largely to fail to take advantage of the material available." Therefore, "assuming that the census figures are accurate, it seems to follow that there must be a large body of literates who fail to qualify as electors." But the remedy suggested in the Simon Report that the literates should have power to vote, will add to the disparity; it will add larger numbers to the urban population voters, and the disproportion between the number of urban voters and rural voters will widen instead of decrease. The Simon Commission recommend that the present number of voters should be trebled. The present number of voters is, for the whole of India excluding Burma, 6,375,000. If that



is to be trebled, it comes to about 19 millions, and the Royal Commission are of opinion that a large number of voters can be managed by the present agency that is available at the disposal of Government; they are not afraid of widening the electorate to that extent. But the widening of the electorate by lowering the franchise will not, as I have pointed out, meet the difficulty of the case; there will be large sections of the community, in fact, masses of the people, who will go without any vote; and therefore we have for that purpose to adopt universal adult suffrage, as is demanded by the Member for labour and by the Members for women. A uniform adult suffrage will give representation to all castes and communities irrespective of the property they hold, because every man in the State has an almost equal stake in its welfare and in its good.

Therefore, Sir, we have to see that some scheme of universal adult suffrage should be discovered, and I am very much indebted to the Marquess of Zetland for placing before this Committee a scheme which I think is wholly workable. It is not a direct system, it is an indirect system of election; and, although I would prefer to have a direct system, still, as a step towards the ideal, I am prepared to accept this indirect way of voting, for the purpose of giving suffrage to the vast quantity of people who have been left out of the franchise and who are likely to remain outside the limits of the franchise if the present suggestion is accepted. The suggestion of the noble Lord, Sir, you already know, and I am very glad to find that it has found acceptance by Sardar Ujjal Singh and Colonel Gidney.

The Royal Commission has laid down certain principles. Universal suffrage is the ideal. If it cannot be attained at once, it should be reached by stages. The present electorate of 6,370,000 should be at once trebled; and under present conditions it will be possible to poll that number.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* Where are you quoting from now? Is that a quotation?

*Mr. Jadhav:* It is not a quotation; it is a resumé. That extension of the franchise should be secured by legislation, so as to prevent power remaining in the hands of the oligarchy.

The population, excluding Burma, is 227,238,000. Of this number 6,375,000 are at present given the vote, and of the remaining adult population 107,000,000 are without the vote, the total adult population being 113,000,000. The Royal Commission think that the present electorate should be trebled. This would still leave 94,000,000 of adult persons without a vote, and one cannot say how many decades or centuries it would take to enfranchise this vast number. I should like to support the proposal made by Lord Zetland, that in every 20 persons one should be allowed to vote. The number of 20 could be reduced perhaps after 5 years to 10, and further reduced gradually at stated periods, so that in 20 or 30 years the whole adult population should be brought on the register. The advantages of that system would be that everybody would get a vote whether direct or indirect. All communities would be pro-



vided for in proportion to their numbers. The recommendations of the Simon Commission with regard to the Despatches of Local and Central Governments concerning nominations would not be required, because the communities to which those nominations referred would have an authentic voice. At the same time there would be no necessity for a Franchise Committee to find out how to remedy the present disproportionate representation of the urban population, and so on. The work of the Franchise Committee would be very much lessened, and machinery would be provided for the automatic widening of the franchise. If the work is left for the Franchise Committee, that Committee will propose a franchise which will bring in 10 to 15 per cent. of the population, but in later years, when the local legislature choose to widen the franchise, another Franchise Committee would have to be appointed to determine how the electoral roll should be increased. All that difficulty will be done away with if the suggestion of the Noble Lord is accepted, that is to say, if we have one person voting for 20, which number in the course of years could be reduced to 15, to 10, and so on. In that way there would be no necessity for the appointment of Franchise Committees. But I hope this Committee will at once adopt the principle of universal adult suffrage.

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* I am in entire accord with every word my sister delegate has spoken. Universal adult suffrage would indeed be ideal if it were possible for us to introduce it immediately, but owing to practical difficulties it has still to be a goal for the future. At the same time, during this transitional period, we have to devise such ways and means as will make the Government of the country really representative. The Simon Commission recommends that only 10 per cent. of the population should now be enfranchised. That is not sufficient, and it would make our objective very remote and distant. What I propose is that at this stage at least 25 per cent. of the population should be given the franchise. In order to broaden the franchise in rural districts, and also to make use of the training and experience of all persons on district boards and local councils, the present property qualification should be reduced to such an extent that the electorate of the local bodies should be the electorate of the Provincial Councils, and the present electorate for the Provincial Councils should be the electorate of the Central Legislature. Along with this a special qualification should be introduced enfranchising every man and woman who can read and write. This should be introduced immediately. This will be the means of giving the vote to most of the people in the urban areas, and at the same time the training and experience of the electorate for the local bodies should be utilised.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* There is, first of all, the question of the size of the constituency. I do not know whether this Committee or the Minorities Committee is going into the matter, but unless the size of the constituency is definitely settled on some principle any extension of the franchise will not produce the desired results. Take the Central Legislature. I represent an



area of 5,000 miles square, consisting of 50,000 voters in three districts. Unless there is a proper redistribution there is bound to be a very unsatisfactory result. We have about 250 districts in India, and if two members were allowed for each, that would make a House of 500. Therefore the size of the constituencies is a very relevant consideration which will have to be gone into by the Franchise Committee.

There is another consideration, namely, that any future development of the electoral system should follow the line of plural constituencies rather than single member constituencies. In India, with its various communities, races and creeds, the creation of single member constituencies is likely to lead to a great deal of trouble. If there were plural constituencies it would be possible to accommodate the minorities and produce more harmonious working in elections than at present.

A third consideration is as regards the electoral qualifications for special constituencies and interests. Many suggestions on this point have been made during the last 10 years, and these were embodied in a memorandum which was placed before the Simon Commission by the Government of India. I should like to draw the attention of the Committee to that memorandum, which appears in Volume IV of the Simon Commission Report (Part I, page 196). Various proposals are set out there with regard to the representation of different interests—landlords, universities, commercial associations, and others. Many suggestions are made in that document with regard to broadening the franchise, and these deserve consideration. Such consideration will have to be given, I suppose, by the Franchise Committee.

Then there are a number of points as regards the removal of disqualifications. One of the questions raised is as to whether a person who has been convicted—and in these days convictions are very numerous—for political offences should remain disqualified from exercising the franchise. If that provision remained, it would disqualify a large number of people.

Sir, on the general question of adult suffrage which has been raised during the discussion, I had expected my friend Dr. Ambedkar to put forward some specific proposals.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* Is not adult suffrage a specific proposal?

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* If you are going to have adult suffrage by primary election and by secondary election, the question has to be considered very seriously and carefully. I am not prepared here and now to endorse all that has been said in regard to the holding of the primary elections, because the question requires very careful consideration, but I for one am prepared to consider adult suffrage by primary and by secondary elections. The question is very difficult and complicated. While I see, on the one hand, that the various communities will not pull their full strength unless some kind of adult suffrage is granted, I see many practical difficulties in carrying out the proposal. *Dr. Ambedkar*





made light of the difficulties of conducting an election. I could tell him of very many difficulties in the conduct of an election, and to say that students of the schools could be entrusted with the conduct of elections is, I venture to think, futile.

It is a very responsible post, and hundreds of objections are made to the officers who conduct these elections by the various candidates and the various communities. It seems to me the difficulties of conducting an election with adult suffrage have not been at all realised. In the present circumstances, while expressing full sympathy with the desire to give every man his chance in the electoral arrangements, I am of opinion that the difficulties have not been fully realised.

*(The sub-Committee adjourned at 1 p.m. until 2-45 p.m.)*

*Chairman:* Ladies and gentlemen, I should like to suggest for your consideration that we might now take up the consideration of the detailed points. I do not know how far that meets with the approval of the sub-Committee as a whole.

I shall regard that as carried. The first point is “(1) Number of voters. Should the basis of the franchise be broadened?”

With regard to that, I think everybody so far has expressed the view that the franchise should be broadened. There is the possible exception of Sir Cowasji Jehangir, but I think even he said that he would be prepared to consider what I may call the Zetland scheme in addition to the existing scheme. Some gentlemen have gone so far as to say there should be adult suffrage, and they certainly agree, therefore, that the franchise should be broadened in a very emphatic manner. I believe, therefore, I represent the unanimous opinion of the sub-Committee when I say we are all agreed the franchise should be broadened. May I ask if anyone dissents from that? If not, that is unanimous.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* I will not commit myself to that extent.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* If Lord Zetland's scheme forms a part of it, then I will not dissent.

*Chairman:* Very well. The next question we have to discuss is, “if so, what increase in the number of voters is now practicable or advisable.”

You will not mind my making just a few remarks on the basis of my own experience. I am an unashamed and unrepentant democrat. That does not mean I am foolish enough to pretend that democracy is a perfect system. I am fully alive—as any thinking man must be to-day—to the disadvantages of democracy; but notwithstanding that I am alive to the disadvantages of democracy, I still believe that democracy is the best system. I do want you in India to profit by our troubles here. We have had some discussion to-day with regard to the number of representatives that are returned to the British House of Commons and the French Parliament and so on and so forth. I do not know what my colleagues in our House of Commons will think when I say this, but I do think it is giving



us democrats very serious cause for anxious thought as to whether the House of Commons, as it at present exists, is capable of dealing with modern economic problems. I have not a shadow of doubt—not the least shadow of doubt—in saying that if the House of Commons, instead of consisting of 615 members, consisted, let us say, of 115, it would be a far more efficient body. Whatever else you Indian gentlemen think of, I do beg of you not to try what I might almost describe as the cowardly resort of getting out of your franchise difficulties by building up what corresponds to a House of Commons which is absolutely unworkable. Speaking as a democrat I would ask you—because we democrats do care enormously about the possibility of working our machine efficiently—not to have in your mind (though this does not come strictly within our terms of reference) a Provincial Legislature any larger than, say, 200 to 250 in the larger Provinces. If you get it larger than that, though it is true you may make your franchise problem easier by being able to have more constituencies, I do assure you you will inevitably find that the machine you construct is not an efficient machine.

The other observation I wish to make is this. I do not know if I am the only one round this table, but certainly I am one who has had some experience as a Returning Officer in this country in two elections, in 1906 and 1910, before I took any part in politics; being very anxious to earn a couple of guineas I went and sat as a Returning Officer. I remember very well that in that village I had two or three illiterate voters, and I never shall forget the time I had with these dear old gentlemen. They said they wanted to vote for the red and the blue. I tried to get them to indicate a name, but I found the name they indicated was always the opposite one to the one for which they wanted to record their vote. They would have been quite unable to vote for a picture of a snake or a ladder. I had only some sixty voters to deal with in that village, but these few old men took up a great deal of my time.

You have to face the realities of the situation, and I ask you to consider whether it is in any sense practicable to try to construct here and now a complete system of adult suffrage.

I suggest we might answer this second question on these lines. Having said that the basis of the franchise should be broadened, we have to deal with the question of what increase in the number of voters is now practicable or advisable, and I suggest we might say, first of all, that we ought to envisage some substantial increase in the present system of direct voting. The Simon Commission suggested it should approximate to 10 per cent. of the population. That involves an increase to two or three times the present number of voters, and nearer three than two. I suggest that we take that, but that we do not stop at that. In addition to that, I suggest that we recommend some consideration of what I may call the Zetland suggestion, since Lord Zetland was good enough to make it here. That is to say, I suggest we recommend a double increase; first of all an increase in the present system of direct voting, bringing the



number of direct voters up to, let us say, about 10 per cent. of the population, and in addition to that this Mukhi system, in order that those who would not be immediately enfranchised under the increase granted might, notwithstanding that, have some means of making their voice heard and their weight felt in the election. After all, we are building for a very few years at the most; our idea is that this system should be revised and brought up to date constantly, and there you would have an easy way of dealing with the situation. If you have a Mukhi system under which 20 people choose a representative, in a few years' time, as somebody has already suggested, that might come down to 15, 10, 2 or even 1, and thus you have a system which is capable of modification, adaptation and alteration.

I put it to the sub-Committee whether we could not deal with this matter on those lines, realising the great practical difficulties of the immediate adoption of adult suffrage. Could not we go a considerable step towards that goal by (1) adopting some such increase as is envisaged in the Report of the Simon Commission, but (2) adding to that this other Mukhi system?

It seems to me we are hardly qualified, at least I certainly am not, to discuss the pros and cons and details of that system here and now. It would be perfectly idle for me, never in my life having been to India, to register a vote on that question; but I do suggest we might send forth our report from this sub-Committee, which must contemplate the setting up of an expert Franchise Committee, and state in our report that, in addition to this increase in the number of direct electors, we suggest that this expert Franchise Committee should take into consideration the possibility of putting on the top of that some such system as has been suggested, in order that everybody, directly or indirectly, may have a vote and make their voice heard.

That is all I have to say, but it seems to me it is on those lines that we might most usefully focus our discussion, if that meets with your approval. I am sorry to say I have already occupied more than my five minutes; I ought to have called myself to order.

*Mr. Foot:* In view of the fact that every inquiry into these matters so far has pre-supposed the setting up of a Franchise Commission, I suggest we might make that the first subject for agreement. It is referred to in the latter part of your memorandum, but I assume that whatever may be our differences as to the widening of the franchise or as to the extent of the widening or as to the extent to which we should make detailed suggestions, there will be general agreement on the necessity of setting up a Franchise Commission.

We are not here to legislate for India or to prepare in anything like elaborate detail the franchise scheme, which will have to be adapted to the various circumstances of the several Provinces, and we might make it our first recommendation, on which I assume we shall be unanimous, that we advise the setting up of a Franchise



Commission. I suppose it would be very much on the lines of the earlier Commission over which Lord Southborough presided. We need not indicate how it should do its work, but that should be the foundation of all the suggestions we have to make. I think we might agree now on that, because the other suggestions follow on that.

*Chairman* : If I may say so, I think that is a very good suggestion. I have always contemplated that it was obviously essential to set up an expert Franchise Committee. It is impossible for us to do all the work that has got to be done, nor have we time to do it. I think we shall probably agree unanimously as to the necessity for setting up an expert Franchise Committee. There may be differences of opinion as to its exact tasks, but I think everybody would agree that some expert Franchise Committee must be set up. It is on that basis, then, that we will proceed with our discussions.

*Mr. Basu* : What will be the object of this sub-Committee in reporting? Will our report contain the terms of reference to the Franchise Committee?

*Mr. Foot* : It will contain suggestions.

*Chairman* : We merely deal with the main suggestions.

*Mr. Foot* : A parallel case arose when we discussed the separation of Burma. Obviously questions of finance and defence came in there and these questions will demand careful consideration. We gave no specific directions either as to finance or defence in the sub-Committee, but said that the Committee to be set up should direct its mind to these subjects. I think if we follow the same lines here that will be about as far as we shall get.

*Chairman* : The question is, " If so, what increase in the number of voters is now practicable or advisable? " *Mr. Joshi*, you have told us your views about adult suffrage, and we have got them in mind.

*Mr. Joshi* : If it is intended that no more should be said about adult suffrage, let us come to our decision, but I myself feel that as you, Sir, have given us the benefit of your valuable experience, we should express our views on some of the points which you have mentioned.

*Chairman* : Certainly.

*Mr. Joshi* : I quite realise there are disadvantages in a large House, the point which you mentioned first. I am not the best judge of the merits of the English system, but at the same time if I may venture to make a remark, as you and some of your colleagues are anxious also to give your judgment on Indian conditions, I would say that I myself feel, as a student of English history, that the inability of your Parliament to deal with the questions before it expeditiously and efficiently may be perhaps due not only to the size of the House, but to other factors. It is quite true that your Parliament is not the fittest body to judge efficiently and correctly on economic questions, because you are not elected merely on econo-



mic grounds; you are elected on several other grounds, and Parliament is not an economic council.

Moreover, while agreeing that a House containing a large number of members is a disadvantage, it is a disadvantage which we may prefer to the disadvantage of disqualifying large numbers of people in our country who have a stake in the country and in the Government. You have said, Sir, that though democracy is the best form of government, it may not be without defects. In the same way, a large House is a disadvantage, but there is no other method, perhaps, which will be better if we are anxious to have real self-government in the country.

As a matter of fact, this is not the only disadvantage from which we are going to suffer. I am told that my friends who belong to the Muhammadan community are insisting on some kind of reservation of seats or separate electorates. That is not the right kind of democracy; it is not right to divide a community on the basis of religion, which is, after all, not the main subject of discussion in the Legislatures, but they propose it simply because it is a method which in their opinion is better than others. There may be a disadvantage in the method of separate representation; that they may themselves admit—

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq:* No.

*Mr. Joshi:* All right! But I feel, on the whole, though there may be a disadvantage in having a large House, it is much better to have it, because in the first place by that method we do try to give political and civic status to the great bulk of the people of the country.

I do not wish to repeat my arguments, but I do want to say this very clearly. To those people who will not be enfranchised, self-government has no meaning. Their condition under Indian masters will be the same, perhaps, as under British masters; they will be the exploited class, and the Indians who will be enfranchised will be as much an exploiting class as our present British rulers. If, therefore, we want to stop that and want the poorest people in the country to feel that they are going to have real self-government, you must find some method by which they will be enfranchised. I am quite willing to discuss the difficulties, but my suggestion to you is this. Instead of deciding outright that adult suffrage is impossible, let us accept the principle that everyone should be able to exercise his vote in the elections. Let us try to find out what the difficulties are and meet those difficulties if possible. If we find, after discussing the difficulties seriatim, that nothing is possible, that by no method can everyone get a vote, then certainly the poor people in the country will have to decide once and for all whether they should be indifferent to the political progress of the country, because from their point of view self-government without the right to vote does not interest them. They are not, as I said at the beginning, out for a change of masters.



There will be proposals made for separate representation on communal lines. I want to ask my Moslem friends—

*Chairman*: No, Mr. Joshi, I cannot have that here, I am afraid. I must rule this out of order. That is a matter for the Minorities sub-Committee. We have heard before, in your general remarks on the second reading debate, that you are in favour of adult suffrage, and I am afraid that nothing you have heard since has made you alter your mind. We may take it that that is your opinion. If you want to add anything on this question of "If so, what increase in the number of voters is now practicable or advisable?" by all means do so.

*Mr. Joshi*: All right, Sir. I want to say one word about Lord Zetland's scheme. I have not understood it properly yet. I take it he suggests that there should be a body of direct voters, and there should be another body who will be indirect voters. What I want to understand from him is this: is he going to propose that out of 100 seats in the Legislature, so many should be reserved for people who will take part in direct elections, and so many others will be reserved for people who take part in indirect elections? That is a matter of interest to me. I want to find out how many people will be direct voters, and what will be their due quota of the seats.

*Khan Bahadur Hidayat Husain*: What is your suggestion?

*Mr. Joshi*: I want to understand in the first place. I will tell you my suggestion. I do not accept the scheme, but I want to understand whether he proposes that the 100 seats in the Council shall be decided in proportion to the number of people who are enfranchised in one scheme, and the number of members who will represent the people by indirect election. If 6 millions is the number of people who will be directly voting, what will be the number of seats reserved for them, and what will be the number of seats reserved for the other millions that will be left? If he proposes that the seats shall be divided in proportion to the numbers of the population, I am quite willing to consider that suggestion; but if he simply says that people who will be directly voting will get 10 times the number of seats that those who will be voting indirectly will get, I am not prepared to consider it. He will be quite justified in putting forward a practicable scheme in order that there may be representation of all classes; if he gives representation to each class according to its number, I am quite willing to consider his suggestion.

*Lord Zetland*: In a couple of sentences I can say what my view is. The question of the proportion of those who would be the members of indirectly elected seats is a matter which I think ought to be left to the expert Franchise Committee to suggest. I do not want to lay down details; I only want to put forward the principle, namely, that those who have not got a vote under the existing system should have this opportunity of making their voices heard



by means of the indirect system which I suggested. I only put forward the principle for consideration.

*Mr. Joshi:* The matter is only a matter of principle. If you are willing to divide the number of seats on the principle of the numerical strength of each community, I am quite willing to consider that question. It will be a kind of separate representation.

*Chairman:* One moment. If Lord Zetland had said any such thing, I should have felt it my painful duty to rule him out of order. The only question we are considering is: "what increase in the number of voters is now practicable or advisable?" We are only considering a main principle; we are not considering detail.

*Mr. Jadhav:* May I point out what I understand when I say that I accept Lord Zetland's suggestion. My point of view was that the same constituency should be contested or should be voted by these voters, 6 millions and so on, and also by 5 per cent. of the "mukhis" who will be brought on the register. So there will not be separate constituencies for these direct voters and for the indirect voters, but there will be the same constituency in which they will both of them vote equally.

*Lord Zetland:* My suggestion was understood rightly by Mr. Joshi. My suggestion was that there should be separate constituencies for the indirectly elected persons. But, there again, I do not want to lay down the law on that question. All I am concerned with is to get this proposal put before an expert Committee for consideration. I do not want to do more than that.

*Mr. Foot:* Could we answer number one by this, because, as I understand, Lord Zetland's proposal or suggestion may be more fitly considered under one of the subsequent heads? Perhaps upon the first point we could simply arrive at a general conclusion: "the Committee is agreed that the franchise should be broadened; but the extent of the increase of the electorate should be left to the Franchise Committee to determine."

*Chairman:* No, I do not think we can do it in that way; that is too broad a principle; I think we should then be washing our hands of it.

*Mr. Chintamani:* Mr. Chairman, I wanted to make one point clear in the general discussion, and now, with your permission, I will do so. I heard it said in the speech of Dr. Ambedkar that the Liberal Party as a body were opposed to adult franchise. I should tell him that that is not the fact. Opinion in the Liberal Party on the question of adult franchise is divided; but from what happened at the meeting of the Liberal Party at Allahabad in 1928, I should conclude that the majority are in favour of adult franchise, and only a minority, though an influential minority, against it. I hope, therefore, he will not think that those who sit on this side of the House, as he put it, were all against the proposal that came from that side of the House. He may remember that Mr. Joshi himself is a Liberal.



Now I address myself to this first question here. I think there will be no two opinions that the question: "Should the basis of the franchise be broadened?" should be answered in the affirmative. I must modify what I have said; I recall that my friend Sir Cowasji Jehangir would not broaden it. I entirely disagree with him, as to the reasons which he gave as well as to the conclusions to which those reasons led him. He said that the broadening of the franchise had led to autocracy. I do not know. In your own country here the broadening of the franchise has led to your Labour Government, and if this is the kind of autocracy to which the broadening of the franchise will lead us in India, I shall not very much dread that prospect.

Then the question arises: What is the increase in the number of voters that is now practicable or advisable? That every adult male and female inhabitant of the country should be a voter, is my answer to the second part of the question as to what is desirable. But various doubts have been expressed as to whether that would be practicable: that there would be some administrative difficulty in arranging and recording the votes of so many people may be conceded. But administrative difficulties exist in order to be overcome, and not to baffle us. If administrative difficulties were to be put forward as an extinguishing reason against a political and social advance, I do not think there would have been any progress in any country in the world; because the permanent officials who are engaged in that administration come to believe in the perfection of things that are and in the undesirability of things that are suggested. I find that more Provincial Governments than one in India have urged, as the one supreme reason against any expansive broadening of the franchise, the administrative difficulties with which they will be confronted in making arrangements. They put forward the same reasons in 1918 when the present franchise was instituted. They have put forward similar reasons on any occasion when any reform was proposed. As a matter of fact, when an elementary reform, long overdue in India, the separation of judicial and executive functions, was decided in principle by one local Government, and the permanent officials were asked for their opinions, one District Magistrate in the United Provinces sent this reply to the Government: "In other words you invite me to state how best to put an end to myself. I decline the invitation, with thanks." Administrative difficulties must not be made our masters and must not be allowed to defeat our purposes.

If, however, the final conclusion that is reached by those with whom the decision rests should be against adult franchise at the present juncture, then in my opinion the least that could reasonably be done is for us to recommend the suggestion put forward by Mr. Srinivasan, that there should be an immediate increase of the electorate to 25 per cent. of the adult population of the country, and also to provide that at the end of every 10 years there should be such revision of the franchise laws as to enfranchise another 25 per cent., without fail every decade. In this way we shall, within



a reasonable interval, get to that adult franchise which is what we should aim at.

I wish to make one more point in this connection. The argument of illiteracy has been made much use of as telling against any extensive increase of the number of voters. At the present moment there are many illiterates who are voters, and many literates who are not voters. But, whoever may raise the objection that illiteracy should be a bar to the franchise, the Government in India should not be found among those objectors, because, when Mr. Gokhale made a very excellent attempt at increasing literacy in India, the Government opposed him, one argument of the official class being that, whatever might be the result of education elsewhere, in India it had nothing but bad effects; it merely produced the political agitator and ruined the character of the people who were educated. If it is income or property taxation, combined with a most moderate literary education—nothing more severe than that which Mr. Srinivasan suggested, and if you agree to recommend the enfranchisement of not less than 25 per cent. at the present moment, with automatic increases at the end of every 10 years, so that in time the whole population may be recognised, then I will reconcile myself to your making a qualified recommendation; otherwise I would rather go with Messrs. Joshi and Ambedkar and say “adult franchise.”

I will not take up much more of your time, but one thing I must say. Having agreed so far with Dr. Ambedkar, I must say I completely dissociate myself from the observations which he made as to the interdependence of the extension of the franchise and the responsibility of the Government. I should have thought that argument could be left exclusively to the British Statesmen who objected to the transfer of power.

*Chairman:* I do not think that arises now.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I am finishing. Do not you want me to proceed?

*Chairman:* Mr. Chintamani, I do not think this arises on this discussion. What Dr. Ambedkar said was a point relevant on second reading; I do not think it arises now.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I only say I disagree with those observations.

*Mr. Basu:* Sir, I agree with Mr. Srinivasan and Mr. Chintamani that the electorate should be increased by at least 25 per cent. of the adult population. Some difficulties have been put forward as militating against an increase in the number of voters; but we should remember that for nearly half a century in India we have had local bodies which are elected: village unions, village panchayats, village boards, district boards, and so on, and either each village or group of villages consisting of seven and eight villages, has had its own peculiar organisation, which organisation is constituted by election. If we trust those village organisations to conduct the election to the Legislature, there will not be that difficulty which has been put forward as a bar to an extension of



the franchise. I therefore think this can be done with a proper utilisation of the agencies we already have. The agencies are there; if we utilise those agencies, the extension of the franchise will not stand in the way of the functioning of an extended Legislature.

As regards the increase in the number of members in the Legislature, an increased number no doubt leads to some delay; but in some elected bodies in which there are a large number of people it has been found convenient to divide up the entire body into small Committees dealing with particular subjects: one dealing with education, one dealing with finance, one dealing with public works, and so on. I believe something of that kind was suggested by the Donoughmore Committee as regards Ceylon. In that way, though the Legislature may be large, we might split up the Legislature into small Committees; the decisions of those Committees might come up before the entire Legislature for final acceptance or refusal.

The urgency of including as many of the people of the country as possible in the voting register is this: the smaller the number of voters, the more likely are the rest of the people to think that it is somebody else's government superimposed upon them without their having had any opportunity of organic action, or any power to influence that government. If we include as large a number as can reasonably be included, then we practically bring a large mass of the people into the government and to support the government, or to oppose it where the government adopt a policy opposed to the general view. I therefore agree, Sir, that the increase should be at least 25 per cent. of the adult population and that the franchise should be broadened.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* Sir, it seems to me that the suggestions made so far on this part of the first head of discussion are easily reconcilable. I believe the general increase recommended by the Simon Commission in the number of voters is 10 per cent. of the voters, which would work out at approximately 20 per cent. of the adult population; and if we add to that the number of voters which could be drawn upon under the suggestion of Lord Zetland, that would probably bring it up to somewhere near 25 per cent. of the adult population. Therefore so far there appears to be general agreement as to the number that may be suggested subject, of course, to dissent on the ground that we should have immediate adult franchise. That is more or less agreed upon; that is to say, 25 per cent. of the adult population.

With regard to Lord Zetland's suggestion I want to put forward what I have understood it to be so that when I say that I agree with that suggestion I shall not be understood to have given my agreement to something which I understood in one way, but which might subsequently appear in Lord Zetland's report to have put been in another way. I agree to this combination of direct voters, and, as I might call them, elected or selected voters, in this way. I propose that we should give a general direction to the Franchise Committee that may hereafter be set up that there shall be an advance in the



franchise on the ordinary lines, that is to say, by lowering the present qualifications to an extent approximately of at least 20 per cent. of the adult population.

*Mr. Foot:* Was that the proposal that was made, may I ask?

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* That is the first, to start with; that is the direct voters.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* What is your 20 per cent.? Is it 20 per cent. of the adult population or 20 per cent. of the population?

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* It is suggested that 25 per cent. of the adult population should be immediately enfranchised.

*Mr. Joshi:* No, no, the total population.

*Chairman:* The total population.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* I distinctly heard the word "adult."

*Mrs. Subbarayan:* 25 per cent. of the adult population.

*Mr. Joshi:* That may come to less than was recommended by the Simon Commission.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* Then the proposal is that the direct advance should in no case be less than that suggested by the Simon Commission, and if that works out to be less than 25 per cent. of the adult population, it should certainly reach at least that point. In addition I understand Lord Zetland's suggestion to be—or at any rate I would like to put it in this way in order to give my agreement to it—that after you have your direct voters, on whatever qualifications may be suitable and may subsequently be settled, you will have a large body of adult people left outside the franchise altogether.

I understand that these people are to be grouped together in groups of 20 or 15, and each of these groups is to elect a voter. I would agree that this voter should also go on the general register. We get voters by property qualification and taxation qualification, and we should also have them by this group qualification. To the general electorate there might thus be added six, eight or ten millions drawn from those on whom the direct franchise has not been conferred under the ordinary qualifications. When these group voters have been added they must rank as do other voters who come on to the roll by virtue of a different qualification. At certain stages a man would go out of the group of indirect voters and become a direct voter. For example, A is a direct voter, and B his son is a member of a group. By the next election A may have died, in which case B, inheriting his property, becomes qualified as a direct voter and goes out of the group. The numbers in the group could be decreased. We could say that a time had come when we could add ten millions more voters to the register, and make the groups consist not of 20 but of 10. In this way we could steadily work towards the realisation of universal adult suffrage. If that is what Lord Zetland's suggestion means I would give it my support.



*Begum Shah Nawaz*: When I spoke of 25 per cent. what I had in mind was 25 per cent. of the whole population.

*Lord Zetland*: Mr. Chintamani has said that he would agree to a first instalment of 25 per cent., and then, in four instalments, one would get adult suffrage. But I would point out that one would get a great deal more than that; it would mean that every child would be enfranchised.

*Mr. Chintamani*: I meant the adult population.

*Mr. Paul*: Our acceptance of this proposition is so dependent on the precise way in which we understand Lord Zetland's scheme that I would suggest that the scheme in outline should be presented to us. It appears that it would involve an addition to the general electorate, that every voter who is elected by the group would get enfranchised as a proxy and be added to the general electoral roll.

*Chairman*: As I understand Lord Zetland's suggestion, it is quite plain. It is a scheme for making an addition to the existing direct electorate in order that those who have not had the privilege of a direct vote may none the less have an opportunity of making their voice heard.

*Lord Zetland*: I see the difference which has arisen over this particular proposal. I think the proposal as I put it forward on the first day was this, that we should have a number of separate constituencies for the group electorate, but I do not press that.

*Mr. Paul*: That would complicate the communal sub-divisions, would it not?

*Lord Zetland*: It might; but in any event I do not press it. All I ask is that this principle of indirect election should be submitted to an expert Franchise Committee for their investigation, and if that Committee came to the conclusion, as I think they might, that it would be more practical to apply the principle in the way just suggested by Mr. Zafrullah Khan, I should have no objection, namely, that the person exercising the franchise on behalf of the group should go on to the register in precisely the same way as the directly qualified voter.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramchandra Rao*: And vote in the same constituencies?

*Lord Zetland*: And vote in the same constituencies. Personally I preferred the separate constituencies because I wanted to secure representation for the actual village population, and what I am rather afraid of is that if they vote in the regular constituencies they will be swamped. Therefore I should have preferred a scheme of separate constituencies for these voters representing groups, but I would not press that point if the Franchise Committee decided to work it in the other way.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: In my own Province in the Punjab there are separate rural and urban constituencies already.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: I am unable to support the suggestion by my friend Mr. Zafrullah Khan. I would invite the



attention of the Committee to one observation made by the Begum, and that is that the franchise should be extended to all those who are now on the municipal registers, the local board registers, and the registers of the village councils. If the extension of the franchise is made in that direction we shall have a great advantage. In the first place, the registers for the Provincial Legislatures will be practically the same as for the local bodies; there will be no duplication of registers. If that be made the basis of voting we shall have registers which will be useful for the extended franchise as well as for the local bodies. I think the development of the franchise should take that direction so far as existing general constituencies are concerned. As regards the voting by direct election, Mr. Joshi has been asking for the representation of Labour.

*Mr. Joshi:* I did not ask for separate representation at all.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* Now or before?

*Mr. Joshi:* I am talking about now.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* Hitherto the case has always been that Labour should be separately represented. Dr. Ambedkar has also been asking for the representation of the depressed classes. Therefore the people who have to receive representation would be all those who do not come into the other register, and both on the ground of convenience and practicability all those who do not come on to the register such as that suggested by the Begum would certainly find their representation by a system of indirect election, and it would be more convenient and proper if these were separately grouped and found their representation in the Legislative Councils by some system of indirect election. The question of proportion is a very difficult one. I think it would be impossible to accept the proposition that it should be on the basis of the population. For the very obvious reason that those who do not come on to the register would naturally swamp those who would come on. I rather think that the former should not have a preponderance of voting power for the legislature. My friends have been asking for a certain proportion of seats. I quite understand that point of view, and if they can put forward any proposal that the additions to the legislature, which have been suggested as involving 200 or 250 seats, may be made in the direction of conceding some seats to those who do not come under the first register, I think such a plan would be quite feasible. It would be more feasible than saying that votes must be given to a certain proportion of the population. What happened last time? The Government or the Franchise Committee suggested that there should be one member for every 50,000 of the population, or something of that kind, and the Provincial Governments were directed to suggest the qualifications which would produce the quota. I think therefore that it would be a better solution to give that number of seats to these representatives, and find out their numbers by some system of indirect election.

*Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan:* There are two points to be cleared up. The first is whether we desire to enfranchise 25 per cent. of



the adult or of the total population. That is a very important point and I am afraid it has not been made clear. So far as I am concerned I shall not be able to support a proposal to enfranchise 25 per cent. of the total population immediately. I think it would be a leap in the dark. Until and unless our electorate has knowledge and experience, and I may add capacity, it will not be able to use that power effectively and efficiently. Unless we educate our electorate and prepare it gradually, systematically and thoroughly for the very important work which it will be called upon to discharge, we shall be reducing the whole system to chaos. Consequently I am strongly of opinion that we should not, in any case immediately, agree to an enfranchisement of 25 per cent. of the population.

I now come to Lord Zetland's proposal, which has been amended out of recognition. I have not been able to find out how the proposal will really work in the villages. I have had the opportunity of representing a rural constituency for the last seven years. It contains about 700 villages. One of the three sub-divisions in the constituency is absolutely impossible for travelling purposes during the rainy season. It is 300 square miles in extent, and there is no railway or motor road, and I can only go about by bullock cart. It seems to me very difficult to organise the groups of 20 villagers peaceably. There are a number of villages which are divided into various sections, with a latent hostility between them, and consequently if 20 villages are to be placed in a group it is quite likely that hostility will be aroused. What authority is going to enforce the decision as regards grouping? It may be necessary to send a Revenue official to enforce the decision. If the intervention of an official is asked in the case of outlying villages there may be an idea that the elections throughout the Province are being officialised. If, on the other hand, you do not help these villagers by asking your officials to group them, and if you leave them to themselves, I am perfectly sure there will be a great deal of trouble in most of the villages if not all of them. Again, take the question of the organisation of the elections. At the present time an election is a very expensive affair. If a candidate stands for a constituency he will have to organise his election campaign twice unless there are separate constituencies for what is called indirect election. If those who vote directly and indirectly do so simultaneously, the expenditure will be greatly increased. Those are some of the practical difficulties which I fear will be experienced by candidates, and my proposal is that instead of this Committee commending this method suggested by Lord Zetland, all it should do at present is to refer it for consideration to the expert Franchise Committee, and that Committee may consider whether it would be applied or not.

Here and now we should not commit ourselves to the principle of the proposal, because if we do that we shall be embarking on a very novel experiment which may not succeed, and which, I fear, will not succeed.



*Sir P. C. Mitter:* The first point I should like to mention is that these Provincial Legislatures, even in the bigger Provinces, should not be more than roughly double the size that they are at present. Within that limit I am in favour of broadening the franchise, remembering always how best we can get true representation. As a matter of principle, therefore, I should not object very much to broadening the franchise in our towns. In our towns there are very few practical difficulties; the voters in the towns are more used to exercising their franchise. They have exercised the municipal franchise for fifty or sixty years, and they are better educated.

The practical difficulties are greater in the rural areas. If our object is to give effective representation to the rural areas, our sole object should be to find how best to secure that, irrespective of theories or of what obtains in other countries where the practical difficulties may not exist to the same extent. With that object in view, I venture to think the method Lord Zetland suggested, namely, setting up indirect additional seats, would serve the purpose best.

Let me explain. In my Province there are 92 seats for the general electorate. Out of those 92 seats five belong to the European groups. They are a limited number and no difficulty arises, so that those can be ruled out. Two belong to the Anglo-Indian group. As to that a question was raised by Colonel Gidney, but even if that number is increased it will not add substantially to the total number, so we may leave that out also. There are 85 others. Out of those 85, 17 or 18 are from the urban areas and 67 or 68 from the rural areas. For the whole population of 43 millions there are now 67 or 68 seats. Even if you sub-divide these constituencies considerably, if you keep to the limit of 200, 225 or 250 seats you cannot increase it very much. On the other hand, if you somewhat increase the number and give additional seats to rural areas by indirect election, you will really be giving the rural interests double representation. They will have representation on the existing franchise, and they will have another system of representation either by the 'Mukhi' system or in some similar manner.

As regards the primary voters, I do not even object to adult franchise, but that is a matter for the Franchise Committee to examine. If after examination the Franchise Committee says that adult suffrage is possible, or 85 per cent., or 75 per cent., I will accept that. Having done that, they may say that they will give power to such and such a number of primary voters to elect electors, and that again is a matter of detail. Something of the kind is done in Denmark and in a different way elsewhere. Those electors are not necessarily elected at the time of general election; in some countries they are elected much in advance of the general election, so that their names are already on the list as electors.

Taking the case of my own Province, Bengal, we have about 5,600 villages, so that there will be a large number of voters and



two or three thousand of these electors. A district which now returns one member will then return two members, one member from the general electorate and one member from this additional electorate. The members who will come from the additional electorate will be elected by the primary voters indirectly by adult suffrage. It is in that form that I would accept Lord Zetland's suggestion.

On the other hand, I would ask Mr. Zafrullah Khan to consider what will happen if his suggestion is accepted, namely, if these electors are to be considered as ordinary voters and to vote as ordinary voters. In that case they will be hardly any use; they will be swamped by the ordinary voters. On the other hand, if they are taken as a separate group you give a more effective representation to the rural areas. However, I think that is a matter for the Franchise Committee.

We have been talking in what, if I may say, so, I consider a somewhat lax manner as to whether it should be 25 per cent. of the total population or of the adult population and so on. So long as we decide that the franchise should be broadened in town areas, and broadened in another way in rural areas, I think the question is one for the Franchise Committee. In some districts less than half the population is adult because the death rate is high; in some districts the men and women are about equal in numbers, while in others this is not the case; particularly in urban areas there are more men than women. I think, therefore, it is not acting with a due sense of responsibility to talk about 25 per cent. or 30 per cent. or 10 per cent. or anything like that; the better course would be to give a general direction to the Franchise Committee and let the Franchise Committee find out.

With regard to the women's vote, in my Province at any rate the women inherit. According to Hindu law, if a woman has a son she does not inherit, but—

*Chairman*: I think this comes under 2 (iii); we have a special heading dealing with women.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I will finish this point in a minute, if you will allow me to do so; I think it has some relevance. If women inherit and if they have a property qualification—I will not go into the details, which are not relevant at this stage—the real difficulty is that their names are not brought on the franchise, and therefore if you give a certain percentage and if, for reasons of education or social reasons you cannot, as a practical proposition, now bring a large number of women on the franchise, that is a point which should be borne in mind in fixing 25 per cent., 20 per cent. or 10 per cent. or whatever it may be.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: If I may say so, I think some of us are confusing two main principles. One is how to give certain sections of the population in India a commensurate voice in the government of the country; the other is the question of weightage for certain communities.



*Several Delegates*: That does not arise here.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: It bears so strongly on the problem that in any conclusions we come to each one, speaking for the interest which he represents, is guided by that main principle.

Now, Sir, I would beg my friends the members of this sub-Committee to separate those two principles complete. There is no doubt we have all definitely come to the conclusion that certain groups and classes of people like the Depressed Classes, who under no system of broadening the franchise will get adequate representation, should be compensated by weightage. We have come to that decision, I think, or at any rate we shall come to that decision.

In the same way another very big community—they may be a minority, but they are a most important minority—the Muhammadans, although under the present franchise they do not get the same number of voters as other communities, are compensated by weightage in the Legislative Councils. The result has been that on account of that weightage, notwithstanding the fact that the franchise gives them fewer votes, they have a larger representation in the Legislature than that to which their population entitles them.

If you divide these two principles up, admitting the one and then adjusting your franchise, I think you will come to more just and more equitable results.

*Chairman*: You have probably cleared the ground, but all this is quite out of order. The only question we are now discussing is “If so, what increase in the number of voters is now practicable or advisable,” and I must ask you to keep strictly to that.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I made these preliminary remarks to lead up to what I want to say now, and I will promise not to be so lengthy as I have been in this introductory part. I made these remarks because I felt the suggestion of even 25 per cent. of the whole population—

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad*: Of the adult population?

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: No, Begum Shah Nawaz said she meant 25 per cent. of the total population, but my friend Mr. Basu said 25 per cent. of the adult population. The two things are totally different, of course.

*Mr. Foot*: One is doubling it and the other means multiplying it by eight.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Yes, and therefore all these suggestions, I may say so with due respect to the Begum, emanate from the feeling that the franchise is the foundation of the representation in the Councils. That is so in all countries.

But where we have introduced the principle of weightage for communities, that principle does not hold good.

I will now make a concrete suggestion, and my concrete suggestion is this, that in adopting the scheme suggested by Lord Zetland we should go in for direct and for indirect election. So



far as direct election is concerned, I suggest there should be no further broadening of the franchise, and that the present franchise should remain as it is.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: No.

*Colonel Gidney*: That is all right.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: That should return a certain number of representatives to the Legislature, both for urban and for rural constituencies. A large number of the population will remain without the direct vote, and for that whole block of the population the franchise should be broadened. It should be on the basis of 25 per cent. of the adult population, and they should return their representatives by the indirect system of election both in rural and urban areas. I make no distinction between the two. That will bring in industrial labour as well as agricultural labour.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: It will not bring in anything of the sort.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: It has always been found very difficult to frame any scheme of franchise whereby industrial labour will be represented. My friend Mr. Joshi knows that perfectly well; it is no new subject to either of us, and therefore, if this other proposal that I place before you is considered, it will give Labour a very fair chance of representation, over and above the representation which is secured under the present franchise.

I may make it perfectly clear that at least in the City of Bombay, where the industrial labour population is very large indeed, they do get representation in the Legislative Council of Bombay under the present franchise, over and above the members who are nominated by the Government to represent Labour. It is wrong to say that under the present system of franchise they do not get direct representation.

I content that even under the present franchise representatives of Labour are directly returned, and therefore over and above that, if my suggestion is considered, Labour will be very fairly represented. I think my suggestion is perfectly clear and I need not repeat it, but I should like that suggestion considered. Let us divide the thing into two and lower the franchise for indirect election so that 25 per cent. of the adult population of that block may get the franchise, and then have a system of indirect election for that block.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq*: Before you allow the discussion to proceed any further, Sir, I should very much like to have one point cleared up. Does Lord Zetland put forward his suggestion as an alternative to separate electorates, or are his proposals subject to the condition precedent that separate electorates shall remain?

*Lord Zetland*: I can say at once that I do not put this forward as an alternative to separate electorates.

*Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain*: I will confine myself very strictly to the question which you, Sir, have so often placed



before us this afternoon, namely as to what increase in the number of voters is practicable or advisable. After having heard all the long speeches which have been made, my humble suggestion is that we should double the number of the proportion of male electors to the adult male population. If we do so we shall find that in Madras the proportion will be raised to 23 per cent.; in Bombay it will be raised to 27 per cent.; in Bengal, to 19 per cent.; in the United Provinces it would go up to 25 per cent.; in Bihar and Orissa it would go up to 9 per cent.; in Assam it would go up to 28 per cent.; and in the Central Provinces it would go up to just under 11 per cent. It is true that the Central Provinces and Bihar and Orissa come very low down in the list, with only 11 per cent. and 9 per cent. respectively, but we must not forget that there are large backward tracts and communities in these Provinces which have not had any representation so far; and therefore, if we were to give them the same status as we would give to more educationally advanced Provinces, probably you would not find a sufficient number of candidates there to go round.

Now, Sir, when we are going to set up a Franchise Committee, I think it is also due to us that we should give certain instructions to that Franchise Committee on which it should frame its proposals. If adult franchise were to be the sense of this House I do not think it would be necessary to set up a Franchise Committee at all, but I suppose the sense of this House is not in favour of adult franchise. There is one consideration I should like to place before my friends on this side of the Table, namely that it is only since 1920, when the Act of 1919 was passed, that real responsibility came into the hands of the people in those subjects which were transferred. Although the framers of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report thought that a convention might be established under which the official members in the Councils would not vote on subjects which were transferred, unfortunately this convention was never established in any Province, and the result was that in every Province the Ministers in charge of the transferred subjects remained under favouritism of the official bloc. The result was that not only was no party established in the Province, but real responsibility was not felt even by the Legislature itself, because all that was decided in the Cabinet was also decided generally in the Council. Therefore I say that, however extensive the franchise may be, however you may extend it, you cannot have labour members in the Council and you cannot have depressed classes in the Council in that number in which you wish they should be, in proportion to the population. If I may be permitted to make a suggestion, it is this: why should not labour send its own members? Why should not the depressed classes send their own members? If all these members, labour and depressed classes, enter the Council, put their heads together, they may frame a policy which will be practicable and for the real good of the country.

Now, Sir, with regard to the suggestion made by the noble Lord, I am afraid it will not work at all. I am simply of opinion that it would not work; for this reason, that it means indirect



voting. I have represented and I am representing even now a rural constituency. Supposing we have 20 people set up in a village to elect one representative. You cannot say that those 20 will consist only of people of the depressed class, or only of Brahmins, or of this or that sub-class. You will have to put them all into a hat. What will be the result? The result will be that the upper class man will dominate the lower class people; people of the money-lender class will dominate those who are indebted to them. Secondly, as compared with the present electorate, you will have a body of people which will not be claimed either by this class or that class. The result will be a confusion of ideas and a confusion of feeling. I may go further and say there might be a conflict between the two bodies of people. Therefore I think, Sir, in no case could the system advocated by Lord Zetland—I think in a more or less half-hearted way—work, at least in my Province. Therefore I think if we could only double the proportion of male electors to adult male population, as it is now, you would have advanced a good bit more than is anticipated by many of us.

*Colonel Gidney:* Sir, I have very few remarks to make here, and I will keep to that to which you have asked us to confine our remarks. I am in agreement with an increase in the franchise, but I am afraid I cannot agree to the general principles which you have laid down, that is to say, a doubling of the present direct system of election, with the "mukhi" system added to that. I say that for this reason, that if you double the present system of direct election you give added power to the very system to which the rural areas, the labour classes and the depressed classes, are objecting. You will give them more than the present total of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions. If you double it you would give them 13 million voters, and you would, by Lord Zetland's system, the "mukhi" system, introduce 5 million more on the basis of 20 villagers to one spokesman. That means you would get a total of 18 millions. You are now not only perpetuating the system of representation to which the labouring classes are objecting, but you are giving them in this doubling  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million more voters.

I suggest that, since the rural and labour people demand a complete change in the system of election, so that they will be given as good and as strong a voice as the intelligentsia, that we should pass a resolution here, or an opinion, that we accept an increase of the franchise to 25 per cent. of the adult population; and, in order to give those who are desirous of proper elections a chance of a voice in the government, that we divide those equally; in other words, we make a total separation between urban and rural areas, with different sets of constituencies; take your 25 per cent., give half of it to the rural areas and half of it to the urban areas. And we should indicate to the Franchise Committee that on the rural constituencies none but rural representatives should be appointed, spokesmen who will accept and voice the opinion of the rural man and the labourer, and not of the monied class or the intelligentsia such as exist to-day.



*Dr. Ambedkar:* Sir, this morning I said what I need say regarding the question of franchise; but, without prejudice of what I have stated this morning, I should like to examine the suggestions which are put forward before this Committee for the purpose of extending the franchise. I take it that this Committee is agreed that the ideal is adult suffrage. Some of us think that it ought to be realised immediately; the rest of our friends think that it ought to be evolved by stages. We have therefore put before us two concrete suggestions. One suggestion is that we should adopt the system of instalment and increase the suffrage by a graduated scheme of 25 per cent. addition to the existing voting list, say at an interval of a certain number of years. We have, on the other hand, the suggestion of our noble friend the Marquess of Zetland in which also effect is sought to be given to some realisation of this ideal of adult suffrage.

Now, comparing the two, I cannot help saying that I have a partiality for the suggestion of the noble Lord, although, as I say, I hold strongly that we must have undiluted adult suffrage. If it were a mere matter of choice between the two, I should certainly like to have a system which immediately lays the foundation of adult suffrage in preference to a system which gives some sort of suffrage to only a class of the people and postpones the fact of self-government to a large mass for a time to come. But, having said that, I cannot, as I say, give whole-hearted support to the suggestion, because I find there are certain difficulties. But, because I think that probably the noble Marquess will come to our help in meeting the difficulties which some of us feel, I propose to make one or two observations. One thing I see: that if this system of indirect elections by groups is adopted, it seems to me the depressed classes probably will not fare better under that system. I say that for this reason: the depressed classes are scattered throughout India in small numbers in every village; their life is practically dominated on all sides by powerful bodies of villagers who hold over them social and economic sway. It is possible, and I think it is also probable, that when this indirect election comes to be applied to them, such an amount of pressure may be applied by the village community on the depressed classes that, in exercising their vote, so to say, in the primary election, they may be compelled to select people who may not be their best representatives. That is a fear which I certainly have.

Another thing which I find is that if this system is to be adopted in preference to the graduated system of extending the vote by instalments, I do not understand why we should confine this to the propertied class or to any other class; I do not see why we should not extend the system in such a manner that adult suffrage should become the foundation of the system.

*A. Member:* That is the intention.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* I am glad to hear that. With regard to the difficulties that have been suggested, that this would complicate the matter of separate electorates, I do not think it will, because



with indirect election you can still maintain separate registers for such communities as may desire to have them. I do not think that will create any difficulty in the matter.

But, as I say, we cannot, for instance, give support to this principle unless we know really how this principle is going to work in practice, unless we know all the details about it. My concrete suggestion, therefore, is that this Committee should appoint a small sub-Committee in order to consider this system and to report upon it, so that we may be better able, with full knowledge and information, to recommend this to a Franchise Committee that may hereafter be left to work out the system. It seems to me in its raw form, if the noble Lord will excuse my using that expression, it is somewhat difficult, and it is too much of a large order for any one of us—speaking, at any rate, for myself—to give out support to this principle.

*Lord Zetland:* In the discussion which has arisen I think there is some misunderstanding on two points with regard to this "mukhi" system. First of all may I say that in my opinion the "mukhi" should be a genuine member of the group; that is to say, he should be a man who is not already qualified to exercise the vote as a direct elector. That meets Dr. Ambedkar's point. None of these people who are represented by "mukhis" will have property qualifications at all. If they had, they would be on the register already, and they would not be eligible to be members of a group. That is the first point.

Another point was raised as to the interference of officials in the formation of groups. Surely there are many parts of India—of course I cannot speak for all parts of India, but certainly I think in Bengal—where the groups could be organised under the supervision of the village panchayat, and an official need not come into it. Then with regard to Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq's question, this system of course would work equally well if you had separate communal electorates or if you did not. If you had separate communal electorates, you would have Muhammadan groups in the Muhammadan districts, and other groups in other districts. Those, Sir, are the three points I wanted to make clear.

*Chairman:* I am much obliged. I was going to say this, ladies and gentlemen. It occurs to me that we really cannot get very much further. I am rather impressed by this consideration. Here I find various people who sit round this table who are in favour of the ideal of adult suffrage, who yet are saying that our present and immediate aim should be to enfranchise 25 per cent. of the total population. Why 25 per cent.? Manifestly because they think that 25 per cent. is all that is practicable at present. But how do they know that only 25 per cent. is practicable? How do they know that as much as 25 per cent. is practicable? They cannot know. That is a matter which can really only be considered by an expert Franchise Committee. Therefore, it seems to me that we can really summarise our conclusion. Perhaps it is too much to ask for unanimity, but I believe that something like this would



represent the majority view; I have jotted it down and I will read it out to you. "It was agreed that the basis of the franchise be broadened and that a large increase was desirable." Now that answers the first question. "Some difference of opinion existed, however, as to the extent to which this is now practicable, and it was realised that this Committee had not the necessary material satisfactorily to determine this question." It seems to me your 25 per cent. is a mere guess, if I may say so. "The Simon Commission suggested such an increase in the number of electors as would bring that number up to 10 per cent. of the total population. Some of our members thought that an increase amounting to 25 per cent. of the adult population was immediately practicable. We unanimously recommend that an expert Franchise Committee should be set up and should provide for the immediate enfranchisement of a number of voters not less than 10 per cent. of the total population and for a larger number, but not more than 25 per cent. of the total population, if that should, on detailed consideration, be found practicable and desirable."

*Mr. K. T. Paul:* Is that the total, 24 per cent.?

*Chairman:* The total. "In addition to this increase we would desire such expert Committee to consider the institution of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote were grouped together in primary groups of about 20, so that each group might elect one of themselves as a representative who would thereby be entitled to vote in the elections to the legislatures, either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters, or in separate constituencies to be formed for the voters selected by the group system." Now I think that fairly summarises the sense of the meeting. I will read it again: "We unanimously recommend that an expert Franchise Committee should be set up and should provide for the immediate enfranchisement of a number of voters not less than 10 per cent. of the total population, and for a larger number, but not more than 25 per cent. of the total population, if that should, on detailed consideration, be found practicable and desirable."

*Sir C. Setalvad:* As to 25 per cent. of the total population, there is no unanimity.

*Chairman:* No, it is "if practicable". If I may just answer that, I am told there is no unanimity about 25 per cent. of the total population; but I point out that is a mere maximum figure, and it is stated in this to be conditional upon the expert Committee finding that to be practicable and desirable.

*Mr. Basu:* Sir, as regards the maximum figure, it has been pointed out to you that in some of the Provinces, if the present figure is doubled, it will exceed 25 per cent.

*Members:* No, no; that is of the adult population.

*Chairman:* Total population.

*Mr. Basu:* But is it necessary to put a maximum figure at all, because the Franchise Committee will be there, they will have to



consider it and go into details. I think we should put the minimum figure; that is all that is required. As regards the maximum, they may decide as to what the maximum should be.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: I should like to make one observation with regard to the first paragraph in your summarisation. I should like to have it stated in the paragraph which you have drawn up that the opinion of the Committee was that the extension of the franchise should be limited by considerations of administration and machinery. That was the only limitation that we thought should be put in.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: It is not merely administration; there are other considerations as well.

*Mrs. Subbarayan*: What is practicable?

*Dr. Ambedkar*: Practical means machinery. I mean the Committee might find that it was practicable with the present machinery that 50 per cent. of the population should be enfranchised.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: Do you mean 50 per cent. of the total population?

*Dr. Ambedkar*: Yes.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: That would be slightly more than universal adult franchise.

*Chairman*: It is suggested that we should leave out the maximum. The whole thing is conditional on the expert Committee finding it practicable and desirable; so that we need not have a maximum. Let us leave out the maximum. Does anyone wish me to read it again?

*Mr. K. T. Paul*: If you leave out 25 per cent., if it weakens our statement, I would not agree to it.

*Chairman*: It does not weaken it.

*Mr. Chintamani*: Very often in these matters when a minimum is stated it comes to be a maximum in actual practice. If we indicate the figure 10 per cent. in our Report, it will show the Franchise Committee that is appointed that we should be contented if they secure a maximum of 10 per cent. Those of us who mentioned the figure of 25 per cent. did so as a sort of unsatisfactory compromise between the present position and adult franchise. I, for one, shall not be happy if you take it out.

*Mr. Foot*: Mr. Chintamani mentioned 25 per cent. of the adult population?

*Mr. Chintamani*: Of the total population.

*Mr. Foot*: I beg your pardon.

*Mr. Joshi*: Sir, I am very sorry to say that you should not put down in the Report that the suggestion is a unanimous one, because I for one would not agree to it, and I reserve to myself the right of re-opening the question of adult suffrage in the full Conference.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: That is my position too.

*Mr. Joshi*: It should be put down in the Report.



*Chairman*: Then I will strike out the word "unanimously".

*Mr. Joshi*: May I suggest to you that in the Report you may mention that there are certain members who advocate the establishment of adult suffrage, and they reserve to themselves the right to raise the question.

*Chairman*: I realise that, but I thought we had all got to compromise with each other as far as we can, because the Report which we make carries much greater weight if it is a unanimous Report. I thought we had largely met this point by saying that we would extend to a very substantial extent the direct vote, and every single adult who did not come in under the direct voting would come in under this scheme, the "mukhi scheme". Therefore you do get every single adult having a chance of making his or her voice heard.

*Mr. Joshi*: Have you agreed, Sir, to Dr. Ambedkar's suggestion that the question of indirect election be considered in more detail?

*Chairman*: If it meets with the approval of the rest of the Committee, I think we had better say that Mr. Joshi and Dr. Ambedkar stated that they would have preferred the immediate introduction of a system of direct adult franchise. What are your views with regard to retaining 25 per cent.? If you, Mr. Joshi, are going to dissent, I do not think the point concerns you very greatly in view of your previous point. I do not know what the Committee feels, but I suggest that we had better retain the figure of 25 per cent. It is a mere maximum (*Assent*). It is conditional upon these people finding it practicable and desirable, and if we retain it we have the great advantage of the support of my friend Mr. Chintamani. May I take it, then, that subject to the note of dissent already recorded—and I think that those who have recorded their dissent, although they would rather have had a simple immediate extension of adult franchise, realise that this is better than nothing—

*Dr. Ambedkar*: It would be a second best provided we knew it was going to work.

*Chairman*: Subject to that, are the rest of the Committee agreed?

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I cannot agree to this figure, 25 per cent. or 10 per cent. in the case of direct election. In the case of indirect election I could agree.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I cannot agree to 25 per cent. until we have the whole of the facts before us.

*Chairman*: We are suggesting that an expert Franchise Committee be set up.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: Before we fully know the facts it would not be right for us to commit ourselves.

*Chairman*: It would not do for us to hand over our job to the expert Franchise Committee. We are in the unfortunate position of having to make some recommendation, and we cannot say that we recommend merely that somebody else should take over our job.



*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I am expressing only my own personal opinion. I suggest to the Franchise Committee that there should be an increase, as large an increase as possible, and I would not have objected to 10 or 20 or 50 per cent., if I knew all the facts beforehand on which to base an opinion.

*Chairman*: Would you like, Sir Provash, to put in such qualification as you desire, to the effect that any recommendation both as to maximum and minimum should be entirely subject to the discretion of the Franchise Committee? I feel that we ought to give that Committee some guidance. However, we have got near enough now, and we will take an opportunity of speaking with you about this afterwards.

*Mr. Chintamani*: I do not know, Sir, whether you will agree to what I am about to suggest, but there is also before us an important proposal that the Franchise Committee should be asked to devise such qualifications as will ensure, as far as possible, the same proportion of voters to population in the different communities. This was proposed by the Simon Commission, and it has been supported by several local governments. Could that be considered new? If the Franchise Committee find it not possible they will reject it.

*Chairman*: I think it comes under the next head, namely, "general basis of franchise. (i) Should the franchise qualifications be the same for all communities in the same area?" I call your attention to those words "in the same area". Do not let us embark now on the subject of women's suffrage or anything of that sort.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I thought from what you ruled that the special interests and communal interests came under the Minorities Committee.

*Chairman*: We shall very likely know more about that after to-morrow. For the moment we are discussing the general basis of the franchise, and whether the qualifications should be the same for all communities.

*Divan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: You said that you would speak to the Prime Minister and let us know whether this matter came within the province of our Committee or of the other.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: I should like to make one proposal. Although the question of universal adult suffrage has been pointed out by certain members of this Committee to be for the present not possible or practicable, it seems to me that it may be possible to have, at any rate, adult suffrage for the depressed classes. There is no reason why, for instance, all communities should have the same franchise—in fact, there may even be cases which we find in the practical affairs of life, that in order to reach equality of status, we may have to adopt, so to speak, methods of inequality. In the matter of treating the richer class as against the poorer, for example, we do enact certain special measures for the benefit of the latter. We tax the richer class at a higher rate than the poorer, the object being that the principle of ability to pay the tax may be realised in



practice. I think that the same consideration might be applied to the depressed classes. If the object of the Committee is that all communities should be represented in equal proportion in the electorate, there is no reason why one class of people may not be treated differently from another class of people if a different sort of treatment is the only means available for the purpose. It seems to me that if, for instance, adult suffrage were applied to the depressed class and not to other communities, but other communities had a system such as Lord Zetland has suggested, it would not be in reality any difference at all, and it would not put any great pressure on the electoral machinery available in the Provinces. Having regard to the peculiar position of the depressed classes, and having regard also to the consensus of opinion that no other system of franchise would give them the vote—and without the vote there would be no solicitude expressed for them by any candidate who stands for the Legislature at the present time—I think that this Committee would not do any great harm if it recognised the application of this principle to the depressed classes.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I have no hesitation in answering the question before us in the affirmative, namely, that the franchise qualifications should be the same for all communities in the same area, otherwise there would be much friction and heart-burning in the same local area, a sense of favouritism and prejudice, which would not make for the friendly and trustful atmosphere so indispensable for the success of any constitution. Having said this, may I add that in my opinion the Franchise Committee should be asked to investigate the question whether it is not practicable to devise such methods as would ensure as far as possible the same proportion of voters to population in the different communities. This would remove irritation and heart-burning and promote feelings of mutual trust. I do not ask the sub-Committee to affirm that it is practicable, and I do not want the sub-Committee to commit itself to that position, but it is a point important enough to justify us in drawing special attention to it and inviting the expert Franchise Committee to give it consideration. That Committee may find that it is not practicable at all; then we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that this important point has not been neglected, and that the reason why it has not been given effect to is simply because of its impossibility. It would be well if the sub-Committee would answer the question in the affirmative, and ask the Expert Committee to devise such qualifications as will ensure as far as possible the same proportion of voters to population in the different communities.

*Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan:* I support Mr. Chintamani. I think that if an attempt is made to bring about an equality between the strength of the population and the voting strength of various communities, it will remove some of the grievances from which various communities suffer, and from this point of view it would be very useful if the proviso suggested by Mr. Chintamani were added as a recommendation.



*Mr. Basu* : I agree with Mr. Chintamani as regards the suggestion that there should be such qualifications laid down as will ensure on the electoral register a due proportion of the different communities to some extent agreeing with their proportion in the population. I would emphasise, however, that there should be no differential qualifications. The qualifications for all in any particular locality should be the same. It will create a great grievance if one community or class has one set of qualifications and another a different set. The qualifications for all should be the same, but there should be an inflow of voters on the register agreeing with their proportion in the population.

*Mr. Joshi* : I support Dr. Ambedkar; at least so far as the depressed classes are concerned. We should lay it down that they should be given adult suffrage. The depressed classes are quite different in their economic and social status, and whatever qualification may be fixed for the other communities, we shall never give the same proportion of votes to the depressed classes. They are to be treated separately, and it is far better to lay it down that they should have adult suffrage. Otherwise if they have the same qualifications as for other classes, the number of voters is bound to be lower than in the case of other communities.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh* : I quite agree with Mr. Chintamani that the qualifications should be the same for all communities in the same area. But this is really a question for the Minorities sub-Committee, and if we decide anything on this point it will be encroaching upon the work of that sub-Committee. If there is general agreement on that point I need not explain it further, but I should like, Sir, to have your ruling.

If you agree with me on that point I need not explain my position further, but I should like to have your ruling on this point.

*Chairman* : This is in order; it is not a question for the Minorities sub-Committee.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh* : Then I would explain that, for example, in the Punjab there is the question of how the three communities should be represented, and that question hinges on the smallest of the three communities, the Sikhs, which is in population about 11 per cent. and in voting strength about 24 per cent. Their claim is that they should have the same weightage which the Muhammadans have in other Provinces. If they got the same weightage, their representation in the Council would come to 30 per cent.

Now, my claim is based on two grounds: on the weightage which other minorities get in other Provinces, and also on the ground that the voting strength of the Sikhs is more than double their population strength. In the same way, the Muhammadans are about 55 per cent. in the Punjab, while their voting strength is about 43 per cent. If the voting strength is to be made to correspond to the population ratio, the voting strength of the Muhammadans would be brought up to 55 per cent., and that of the Sikhs



would be brought down from the present figure of 24 per cent. to 11 per cent.

That is the main case which will be before the Minorities sub-Committee, and if we are going to make any recommendations on the lines suggested they will go right to the very root of the case which is going to be presented before the Minorities sub-Committee.

This is one of the main matters which has got to be decided by this Conference, and on that ground I would submit that it may be perfectly correct that the franchise qualifications should be the same for every community in that area, but any attempt to make the voting strength the same as the population strength will bring up the whole trouble which is to be put before the Minorities sub-Committee.

*Chairman:* The question as it appears in the paper is, "Should the franchise qualifications be the same for all communities in the same area," and it is pointed out to me that the word "area" may be rather misleading, and that it might be better to say "in the same Province". No one is tied down to the idea that one Province must have the same principle as another, but I suppose there is no idea that little bits should be selected inside any one particular Province and given a different franchise qualification from that obtaining in other bits of the same Province. That is the sense in which I understand it.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* We do have differences in different bits of the same Province.

*Chairman:* I am told the word "area" was put in for this reason. It is not meant to depart from what I have said, but Sind, of course, is part of Bombay, and the existing qualifications in Sind to-day are different from the qualifications in Bombay. That is why the draftsman has used the word "area" instead of the word "Province".

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* In Calcutta the electoral qualification is different from what it is in Howrah, on the other side of the river, because they are differently administered.

*Mr. Joshi:* Is the question of rural and urban included in this question?

*Chairman:* No, I do not think so.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* The previous speaker has submitted that this question goes to the root of the communal question, as it is generally described, but I do not agree with him. If there were no communal question whatever involved in this, we should even so have set before us the goal which we desire to reach in this matter of the franchise, and that goal is universal adult suffrage. That being so, every step that we take towards the achievement of this ideal is bound to have this result, that the proportion of each community—whether it is a question of separate electorates or not, or of weightage or not, or whether there is any communal question involved or not—in the voting register would either rise up to its



proportion in the population or fall to its proportion in the population.

That result is bound to come about. It does not matter whether the minority question is or is not considered, and therefore the only question raised by Mr. Chintamani is this, that instead of postponing that result with regard to each community until the whole adult population may be enfranchised, we should endeavour to ease the situation and to remove several grievances that exist by seeing if it is not possible at this stage to frame the franchise qualifications in such a way as to see that the whole electorate, when it has been determined, shall from this moment, so far as may be practicable, reflect the same proportions as it is bound to reflect when we arrive at the stage of universal adult franchise.

That being so, my submission is that this question has not anything to do with the Minorities sub-Committee or with how the Minorities question shall be adjusted. The question really is that a suggestion should be made to the Franchise Committee which is to be set up hereafter that in devising these qualifications they shall have in their minds, apart from other results which ought to be achieved by those qualifications, that this may be achieved at this stage rather than at a subsequent stage when everybody will be admitted to the exercise of the franchise.

*Divan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: What is important in this if there is not to be a general constituency from which Hindus and Muhammadans alike will be returned? I do not see its importance if we are to have separate constituencies.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: Apart from the question of Muhammadans and Hindus, you will get the question of the depressed classes. If by having one qualification you will have a much larger proportion of the depressed classes admitted, while by having another they will be excluded, while the total number of electors admitted to the register may be the same in either case, by having the former qualification you will secure a greater number of the depressed classes but a fewer number of high caste people. In that way you will be able to remove one grievance. Apart altogether from communal feelings, it does not matter from this point of view whether separate electorates continue to exist or not. We do not know how long they will continue to exist. In some Provinces the Muhammadans may give them up, if they find that in the general electorate, owing to their number having been brought up to correspond to their proportion of the population, they are able to exercise the same influence on the Legislature as was the case with separate electorates. That will be one inducement to hold out when you ask the communities to go into general electorates; if they have that guarantee they may be more inclined to make that experiment. I do not say they will give up separate electorates; I cannot discuss the minorities question here. But I can tell you this, that if you endeavour at this stage to place each community in relatively the same position with regard to its power to influence the election of the Legislature as it would be in at the time when adult universal



franchise is introduced, you will be easing the situation considerably and you will remove many grievances.

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad*: I agree with my friend, Mr. Chintamani, that the qualifications should be so regulated as to secure the result that the population percentage of each community may be reflected in the electoral register. If you do that, many difficult questions that are at present troubling us may, in the course of time, be automatically solved.

I do not agree with Sardar Sampuran Singh that this is infringing on the functions of the Minorities sub-Committee. All it is thought, really, is that every community which has a certain percentage in the population should, as far as possible, have a similar percentage on the electoral register, so that it can make its influence felt in the result of the elections with the full strength of its proportion in the population.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: If they are voting together that point is a good one, but not if they are not voting together.

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad*: Further, Sardar Sampuran Singh said that if you do that in the Punjab, the Sikh community, which is only 11 per cent. of the population but which has at present 24 per cent. on the register, will lose the advantage that it has at present. That, however, is a different question altogether. If the Sikh community, as a minority community in the Punjab, requires special protection, it can claim, as it has now, a certain weightage, just as the Muhammadans in the other Provinces have a certain weightage. But that is a different question altogether, and one which will have to be considered by the Minorities sub-Committee. Any other community would be on the same footing. All that we are concerned with in this Franchise sub-Committee is to have the register so framed that it will faithfully, as far as possible, reflect the population percentage of each community. That is all that we are asking should be done at present, and it does not cut across any other question at all.

*Chairman*: I should like to intervene at this stage to ask you how far this represents your views? It will do as a subject for discussion. "We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualifications should be the same for all communities, but we desire that the expert Franchise Committee, in making their proposals, should bear in mind that the ideal system would, as nearly as possible, give each community a voting strength proportional to its population, and that this Committee should so contrive their franchise, so far as practicable, to bring about this result."

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I suggest another addition, namely, if they are voting together in one electorate.

*Chairman*: I do not think, Sir Provash, that that matters very much. If you have separate electorates this point may be of comparatively small importance, but it is important to try to get the thing the same, so that, if the day ever arrives when separate electorates are done away with—I am not expressing any opinion



on that; it does not concern us—then you have the ground clear, and it is a much easier terrain to work on.

*Sir P. C. Mitter* : I do not at all press my point.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh* : I should like to have my dissent noted on the second part of this, about bringing the proportion of the voting strength and the numerical strength of the community together.

*Chairman* : I will gladly have that inserted if you want it, but I should like to make the position plain, because I am not sure you really do dissent from that at all. You are apprehensive that this will have some result on your separate electorate. If it would, I should entirely agree with you, but it is entirely without prejudice to that point; it does not touch the point of separate electorates at all. So long as you have your separate electorate it does not affect you.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh* : It reduces my voting strength.

*Chairman* : It really does not.

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad* : Your 24 per cent. remains.

*Chairman* : It does not affect in any way the number of members, but only the number of voters who vote for those members. I will gladly insert a note of your dissent, but I really think, if I may say so, that you are dissenting under a misapprehension.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh* : You may say that I object in case this brings about a reduction of my representation in the Legislature.

*Chairman* : It does not, but I will put that in if you like. It has nothing to do with it.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh* : It would eventually. My voting strength is the strong weapon in my hand; if that weapon of voting strength is taken from me, I become weak.

*Mr. Chintamani* : Sir, this proposition should be read in conjunction with the proposition which we have already accepted. We have not recommended a reduction of the voting strength of any part of the population; on the contrary, we have recommended that the franchise should be so widened and lowered that there will be an increase of the voting strength of all sections of the population of anything between 10 and 25 per cent. The result will be that not a single member of the Sikh community who now enjoys the vote will be deprived of it by this proposition; on the contrary, many Sikhs not now on the register are bound to come on the register as a result of our first recommendation.

The result of our second recommendation will only be this, that the voting strength of other communities proportional to the population will be increased, not that the voting strength of the Sikh community will be decreased; and surely no one can have a grievance if others are levelled up without his being levelled down. This has nothing to do with separate or joint electorates or with the proportion of representation enjoyed by any community in the



Council, and therefore I do not think Sardar Sampuran Singh need dissent.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I quite agree in general principle with what Sir Chimanlal Setalvad has said, that all this will help to lead up to joint electorates if they are not to come immediately. But there is a point that deserves consideration, and that is, that there are some small but important communities which to-day secure representation in the joint electorates due not to their numbers but to their voting strength.

I will instance the case of my own community. In the city of Bombay, with a population of 1,200,000, the Parsis number only 45,000—45,000 out of 1,200,000. In other parts of India the question does not arise. There, however, we get our representation in the Council in joint electorates, and though I will not say this is entirely due to the fact that our voting strength is far greater than that to which our population would entitle us, nevertheless that has a very influential effect upon securing for us adequate representation, and therefore if this principle is adopted, that the voting strength should be in proportion to the population, I am afraid the representation of my small community in Bombay will be wiped out altogether.

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad*: The present number of Parsis on the register will not be decreased owing to this.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: It comes to the same thing. I have at present a proportion of one-third, but though the number may remain the same my proportion may become one-hundredth part, and therefore, to that extent, my present status will be detrimentally affected.

Notwithstanding that, I am not coming in the way of the proposal at present enunciated. Because I fully believe that joint electorates ultimately are our salvation, and if we cannot get it now, any step that will lead to it in the future should not be opposed by any one of us present. But I may, at the same time, clearly state that small communities like mine and the Sikhs in the Punjab will then require special consideration, and at that time I trust that no Delegate, whether he be Hindu, Muhammadan or any other community, will forget that very essential point. I therefore desire to make this point clear at this very stage.

*Colonel Gidney*: Sir, I should like to join with my friend; I share the same fears.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh*: It is yet to be seen what consideration is going to be shown to us if that occasion comes. I would ask that my dissent should be recorded.

*Chairman*: Certainly. Then this is as I understand it: "We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualification should be the same for all communities, but we desire that the expert Franchise Committee in making their proposals should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportionate to its population, and



that this Committee should so contrive their franchise as, so far as practicable, to bring about this result. Sardar Sampuran Singh dissented from this statement".

*Mr. K. T. Paul*: If there is a slight alteration of the wording, if you said: "should not be less than proportion to the population".

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I think it might be said that this proposal should not in any way affect the voting strength of small minorities.

*Sir H. Carr*: Would it help the position if, after the words "for all communities", we added "in general constituencies"? That might meet Sardar Sampuran Singh's point.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: It would not meet my point at all.

*Sir H. Carr*: Of course the Sikhs are a special constituency.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: It does not affect the question of joint or separate constituencies at all.

*Colonel Gidney*: It would help the special constituencies.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: I see the point; what is meant, Sir, is that this applies to the general elections, not elections to represent special interests like the universities and zemindars.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: I have already raised the qualification for special interests, and so on.

*Chairman*: That is the next point; we must dispose of this point first.

*Colonel Gidney*: May we add the words suggested by Sir H. Carr?

*Chairman*: I do not mind, if the meeting want the words in: "for general constituencies".

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: That does not meet my point, Sir; I do not know of any other instances, but there may be very small communities.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: Your point is different.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Separate and joint does not help us at all.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: It is not for the purpose of helping you; it is for securing a distinction.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: My point is the same as Sardar Sampuran Singh's; I think there might be something added with regard to a very small community like my own. If the voting strength of my community is proportionate to my population, I shall get no voting strength at all.

*Chairman*: Is not that a point, Sir Cowasji, which ought to go before the Minorities Committee?

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: No, we have never claimed the privileges of a minority.

*Chairman*: But is not that the logical result, if you are going to say: "If you extend the franchise in this way I shall be swamped;



it is true I do not lose any votes, but if the votes of other people are very much increased, I shall be in a worse position." If you say that, is not it the logical thing to say to the Minorities Committee "Now that being the position, I am not confronted with it to-day but I shall be confronted with the position to-morrow, and then when that comes, you ought to help me with regard to reservation of seats"? Is not that the position?

*Sir C. Setalvad*: May I say something about the minority which Sir Cowasji represents? The Parsi community in Bombay, for instance, whatever there may be on the register, are such a leading community in education, commerce, industry and enterprise, that they will be at the top any way and under any circumstances; they have been all this time.

*Colonel Gidney*: That does not apply to all minorities.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: No; I am speaking only of the Parsis; they have led in commerce, politics, in municipalities, everywhere, because of their intelligence and public spirit.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Thank you for the compliment, but I think it would be very dangerous for me to accept it altogether.

*Colonel Gidney*: I do think that if you added the words "general constituencies", it would remove any apprehensions.

*Chairman*: Would it? Because I should like to get unanimity. If I add the words "in general constituencies", does it meet Sardar Sampuran Singh's point?

*Sir C. Setalvad*: It does not meet his point.

*Chairman*: I do not think it does. If I add the words "in general constituencies", does it meet your point?

*A. Member*: No.

*Chairman*: I thought not, and therefore I will not add it. Lord Zetland, what we have done is this. On this second point: "Should the franchise qualifications be the same for all communities in the same area", we have recommended as follows, subject to your approval: "We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualifications should be the same for all communities, but we desire that the expert Franchise Committee in making their proposals should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its numbers, and that this Committee should so contrive their franchise, as, so far as practicable, to bring about this result. Sardar Sampuran Singh dissented from the last half of this proposition".

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: The first part is impracticable.

*Chairman*: I do not think they can do much, but we give them it.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I do not think it is a practicable proposition.

*Chairman*: Nor do I.



*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: And it will knock out small communities altogether.

*Chairman*: The next is: "Assuming that age is not to be the only qualification, should there be (a) a property qualification, (b) an educational qualification, (c) any other qualification, e.g., military service?" We will take them one by one. We will first of all discuss: "should there be a property qualification?" We are not concerned what it should be; we are merely concerned with the question: "Should there be a property qualification?" We are not concerned to argue again the question of adult suffrage or anything of that sort, because this question assumes that age is not the only qualification.

*Mr. Joshi*: May I suggest, Sir, for the convenience of discussion, that instead of taking them one by one, we should generally discuss what should be the qualification?

*Chairman*: Oh! no!

*Mr. Joshi*: Or, in the alternative, I may be allowed to suggest one more qualification which is not here. That qualification is a properly understood qualification, namely the qualification of income. I am not suggesting taxes at all.

*Chairman*: You may certainly suggest another qualification, but it will be (d). At present we are discussing (a), a property qualification.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Accepted.

*Chairman*: Is that accepted?

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: This morning I suggested that the present property qualification should be lowered in such a way that the electorate of the local Governments should be the electorate of the Central Government. I should like the Committee to consider that suggestion.

*Chairman*: I do not think that arises here, does it? This is simply the question as to whether there is to be a property qualification, and I think on the assumption that age is not to be the only qualification, that is accepted.

*Mr. Joshi*: May I say that I am opposed to property qualification altogether. I think on the whole we have now accepted a proposition that the qualification should be such that the voting strength of each community will be the same. If we adopt property qualification, such a result is not likely to take place. The number of people who will possess property, by which I understand the Committee means landed property. I mean that the Committee really means by the word "property" either land, cultivated or uncultivated, or houses, or any other immoveable property. If that is so, the number of people in different communities who will possess this property will differ, and you will not get the result which we wish to get, namely, that the number of voters in each community should be the same as their proportion to the population. I do not propose



to speak on my proposal, namely income, which in one sense is also property.

*Chairman:* Certainly, in every sense I think.

*Mr. Joshi:* If we understand that word in that sense I shall not vote against property. But now I am opposing it because property really means here landed property or house property. If "property" means income, let us make it clear that by "property" we mean income; because the property of a working man is the labour that he puts forth, his power to work. If that is recognised as "property" I shall not be against it. But I do not want many qualifications; I only want one qualification which will be very simple and which will give us the result which we desire, namely, that the number of voters should be in the same proportion as the population; that will be achieved by adopting income as a basis of qualification.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* Mr. Joshi must realise that a rental of Rs. 5 is a property qualification.

*Chairman:* Not only that, but rental is a property qualification and income is a property qualification.

*Mr. Joshi:* That will not give the desired result. My friend Mr. Jadhav pointed out that if you take rent, ten people may occupy one room, and only one of them will be enfranchised; but if you take income then all the ten may be enfranchised. Therefore income is a better and simpler qualification.

*Mr. Basu:* Mr. Chairman, the misunderstanding arises out of the fact that, so far as present electoral practice in India goes, property qualification has been understood in a very limited manner. It is ownership of property, land or building, or occupation of property—that is as a tenant—or payment of income tax or some local or municipal tax. In Bengal the payment of the chowkidari tax or road cess, and payment of Government revenue up to a certain limit is sufficient; but there is no provision in Indian law, apart from payment of income-tax, by which a wage earner or those that have a certain income can come on the electoral register. That is the head and front of the objection which Mr. Joshi has urged. A man may earn say Rs. 30 a month; he may not be the occupier of a house or rooms of the necessary annual value, but he may be, all the same, earning as much or more than a person who occupies a room on his own behalf. In India a great many people club together; then one of them hires a small place and a great many live there. The man who hires the place has probably his vote on the register, but the others who club with him for the purposes of hiring the house and using it do not come on the register, though they may be wage earners to an equal extent with the man who is on the register. If by property qualification is meant a property qualification including the earning of an income, and the limit of income is fixed by the Franchise Committee according to the requirements of different Provinces or according to the conditions prevailing in the different districts and different localities



ies, then it may be done, if we do not exclude the income of a man apart from any other items of property.

*Colonel Gidney*: Sir, I agree with what Mr. Joshi has said on this matter, because the community I represent would suffer in the same way as the labourer; in fact my community is almost entirely a labouring community. Very few of them possess property; in the case of most of them their property is the labour they give to the State. That being so, I would certainly object to a property qualification unless it included an income, as to which we might allow the Franchise Committee to adjudicate.

*Chairman*: I think it is quite plain that "property" does include income. At the present moment one of the heads of franchise in India is the payment of a certain amount of income tax. Unfortunately the way in which you judge income is by the amount of tax a man pays. Consequently the Franchise Committee may say that the payment of a very small tax, half a rupee a year, may qualify you. That is a property qualification within the meaning of these words; therefore I gather that everybody round this table answers Yes to this question. Some members want it made plain. I think there is no objection to that: that property does not only mean landed property or rental, but also includes the franchise which comes from paying any income tax, which in its turn is dependent upon an income.

*Mr. Jadhav*: No, income tax is only paid on incomes of over Rs. 2,000; persons whose incomes are below Rs. 2,000 are not taxed at all. Under the scheme of Mr. Joshi they ought to have a vote.

*Chairman*: However that is, income is a form of property here and we can simply answer that there shall be a property qualification. We leave it to the expert Committee to say what the property qualification is to be.

*Mr. Joshi*: My idea in suggesting that we should discuss these heads all together was that we should be able to discuss the comparative merits and the simplicity or the complexity of these systems. If we say Yes to property qualification, and then again say Yes to income qualification, another point that arises is this: should the income from property and the income from wages be the same for qualifying a man for a vote? My view is that if we once adopt income as the basis, whether that income comes from houses or land or from investments in the bank, it is income; that we should simply say that a particular minimum income should be the basis whether that income comes from house property, land property or investment. That should be the basis for the calculation; it will be a simple thing. May I again suggest that for the sake of discussion we should take all three heads together, so that we may get a better result.

*Chairman*: No, we had better have "income" as a separate heading: (d).

*Sardar Sampuran Singh*: I think there is some misunderstanding about the words "property qualification". As you, Sir, put



it very clearly, income-tax comes within property qualification, so that makes it very clear that income also comes under the head of property qualification. But as my friends are anxious to have it very clear, instead of making that a second head, would it not be better if we qualified this by saying: "a property qualification, which will also include income qualification"?

*Chairman:* You see the difficulty I feel is this, there is no harm in saying: "Any property, which may include income"; but in practice if you come to consider it, the only way in which you can prepare the list, the only way in which you can tell what income a man has got from this point of view, is to see whether he pays tax or not. Otherwise anybody may come and say: "I have got an income of this, that or the other." But still, all we are going to do, after all, is to leave this to the expert Franchise Committee. It is enough for us to say that we should place that before the Franchise Committee on the assumption that age is not to be the only qualification, that they should have to regard a property qualification, and that they might take the question of income into their consideration under the heading of "property".

*Mr. Chintamani:* Property, including income, or payment of tax or rent.

*Chairman:* Certainly, I do not think there is any objection to that, as long as we make it plain it is a matter for them to consider.

*Colonel Gidney:* I do not think that will meet the objection, if you will allow me to say so. When you leave it to the Committee to decide, with the remark that they should consider what amount of income would give a man a right to vote, you must remember that to-day you have to earn Rs. 2,000 a year before you pay income-tax. That is a distinct qualification affecting those who get Rs. 1,999 a year. Moreover, the question of rent would not apply to many people, as has been explained by some of the members of my community. I do not think that would satisfy the community I represent; nor would it satisfy Mr. Joshi's community.

*Chairman:* What are the words which the Committee would suggest? "Including income and"? Or should it be "or"? Perhaps we might have it "and/or". (Several Members: "Or".) Very well, "or".

*Mr. Jadhav:* At present the qualification is not the holding of property, but some other qualification. For instance, in Bombay a man may rent a room for a few rupees a month, and he is given a vote. He simply pays the rent, he does not own the room, and he is under one month's notice.

*Chairman:* I will consider the appropriate words to put in and submit them to you. The word "property" has given rise to ambiguity, and I will clear it up.

We pass on now to sub-class (b) "an educational qualification". We have to say "yes" or "no". Should there be any educational qualification?



*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: If educational qualifications are put in without any other qualifications I should strongly oppose the suggestion.

*Chairman*: Let me point out that this is not going to disqualify the people who are not educated.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: I oppose the principle that a man should get on the register merely by being educated. As one representing the Christian community I should welcome this proposal in some respects, because it would give us a larger percentage, but there is also another aspect, and I want to put forward the view of the non-Brahmin section of Madras. If this proposal were adopted the result would be that the majority would be dominated by a very small community which has had education for centuries, and which would be able to place on the electoral roll practically all its adult members. In that way the burning question of Brahmin and non-Brahmin, rather smoothing down now, would come up again. The politics of Madras would once again be dominated by the Brahmin, and the non-Brahmin masses would resent it. With the present electorate we have got about one and a half million Brahmin voters.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: Out of 41 millions.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: The whole population of Brahmins is one million. Even if they all came on the register it would be one million out of 40 millions. Can we be told how many Brahmins are on the register, and how many non-Brahmins at present?

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: About 12 to 15 per cent. of the Brahmin and 80 to 85 per cent. of the non-Brahmin. In some districts the proportion is about 25 per cent. to 75.

*Sir C. Setalvad*: If educational qualifications were introduced what would be the Brahmin percentage?

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: At least 50 per cent. So far as my Province is concerned—particularly my own district—we can hardly find one single Brahmin who is not literate. The difficulty will be to say who is educated and who is not. Is it going to be a mere case of capacity to sign one's name?

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I am quite ready to leave it to the non-Brahmins to adjudicate in this case.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: In the absence of any representative of the non-Brahmin community of Madras, I am arguing their case. It is a question of explaining the situation. When the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms came in a separate electorate was desired by the non-Brahmins, but now, as a result of ten years' experience the number of non-Brahmins on the electoral roll has attained a fairly large proportion, and they have got a fair footing. If you introduce an educational qualification, however, it will mean that a small minority community, constituting about 3 per cent. of the population, will take on the electoral roll and part out of all portion to their strength. By introducing an educational qualifica-



tion you will be making it impossible for the Expert Franchise Committee to act up to your instructions that the proportion on the electoral roll shall be as far as possible representative of the proportions in the population. Therefore I would oppose any suggestion that education as such without any other qualification should qualify a man for voting.

*Mr. Basu:* I am afraid that Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam is fighting a shadow. In my Province of Bengal there is an educational qualification as regards the electorate to the local bodies. It consists of passing some test laid down by the Universities, and the proportion of those who qualify for that test, as compared with the general population, is so small that it does not generally matter whether they come in or not. On the other hand, if you do not bring in these men on to the register when they are able to satisfy an educational test you create a certain difficulty. In our country, unfortunately, the schoolmasters are very much underpaid. They do not come up to the income-tax standard, and therefore they are not on the register, and to that extent they are politically a dissatisfied lot, and that creates a very great amount of mischief. In the schools you will find the pay for the teachers ranging from Rs. 10 a month upwards—that is, in the primary schools. It is below the minimum standard for payment of income-tax. I should like to ask the member who has brought this forward what is the percentage of Brahmin students in the schools in his own Presidency? I agree that they may be the more brilliant students, but it is not by reason of their brilliancy that they will be admitted to the register. It is simply a case of passing an educational test. I should think that the non-Brahmin would represent 90 per cent. of those on the rolls of the schools. I venture to say that the addition that will be made by reason of the educational test will be so small as to be negligible. You will find by introducing people into the electorate as a result of the educational test that you will be satisfying a small but very important class who will feel that in this way they have become associated with the affairs of the State.

*Sir J. Jehangir:* I think we have rather got off the point in this discussion. The question is whether the Franchise Committee should embody this form of qualification or not. It has been preceded already by two conditions. In the first place you have given a percentage for the total electorate, and you have said that one community should not have more on the electorate roll in proportion to the population than another. After those two conditions, the question is whether a third condition, that of an educational test, should be set up. If you leave out this test the Universities will be disfranchised. I think the answer to the question whether there should be an educational qualification ought to be in the affirmative. Quite definitely and simply the answer is "Yes." There can be no other answer. If the Expert Franchise Committee desire to insert this qualification, they should be allowed to do so, but it is subject, as I have said, to the two preceding conditions,



which must not be infringed. The object of putting in an educational qualification is, of course, to improve the quality of the franchise.

*Mr. Joshi:* I feel inclined to oppose this suggestion. I do not know for whom the proposal is intended. My friend opposite has said that he wanted to include schoolmasters, but surely the schoolmaster will have some income, and by reason of that qualification he will be entitled to the vote. If you include income as a qualification—and income need not be judged by the payment of tax—then for whom is the educational qualification intended? Almost every educated man has some income, whether from property, wages, salary or investments. The only people to be benefited will be the students. I do not know whether we are going to enfranchise the students. Every other educated man will have some income, and is bound to get a vote. I have one special reason for opposing this suggestion. I see that the people who possess property and income want to get political power into their own hands, and I want to have some method by which this transference of political power will be prevented. If you leave out the educated classes and people like the schoolmasters, who may not possess property or the high income which these gentlemen will prescribe, they will join the working class and the masses in agitating for the lowering of the qualification. That is a safeguard for the working classes. I want, therefore, those educated classes who do not possess property or large incomes, not to have a special vote by reason of their educational qualifications; if they have an income they will have a vote, but by abstaining from giving them the educational qualification we shall be more likely to get the educated lower middle classes on the side of the poorer classes in demanding a lowering of the franchise limit. I quite realise the point of my friend Mr. Basu. He wants to transfer this class which agitates for lowering the franchise from the unenfranchised to the enfranchised, so that the poor uneducated classes should have no protectors and should have no people to help them in their agitation. Sir, it seems the worst thing that this Committee will do. The last safeguard for the working classes and the poor man will be removed by this.

*Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan:* I am afraid the discussion on this subject has been side-tracked. Opposition has been offered to it not because the argument is susceptible, but because it will increase the voting qualifications of various communities. This proposal was made by the Committee appointed to operate with the Simon Commission in my Province, the U. P. It was urged by a very powerful section. It was urged that in addition to the ordinary qualifications which are enjoyed now by various classes of electors, if a person is also allowed to vote who has passed the fourth class in the elementary school it would be a great incentive to the development of primary education, and it would also increase the interest which the countryside takes in these elections. Sir, the matter was referred to the Director of Public Instruction. We wanted to know



if this proposal would work, whether it would be possible to compile list of voters on the basis of this qualification, and the Director considered the matter very carefully and came to the conclusion that it would be practicable and possible and that it could be worked. I am very strongly of the opinion that an educational qualification of a fairly high standard—not merely the ability to read and write, but of the standard, say, of the fourth form of the elementary school—should certainly be imposed. I do hold that view because if you merely insist on the ability to read and write it does not signify very much, because there is the danger of relapse into illiteracy; but if you lay down the condition that only those persons should be able to vote who have passed through a prescribed class, then it would be of great use, and would serve as a sort of incentive towards educational advance in India.

*(The sub-Committee adjourned at 5-5 p. m.)*

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD MEETING OF SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI  
(FRANCHISE) HELD ON 30TH DECEMBER, 1930.

*Chairman:* We are now discussing the question of the educational qualification. I may just remind you that the second conclusion to which we came was this: "We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualification should be the same for all communities, but we desire that the Expert Franchise Committee, in making their proposals, should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its population, and this Committee should so contrive their franchise as so far as practicable to bring about this result." I am afraid that is rather a counsel of perfection, but at the same time the only way in which we can possibly expect them to carry that out is if we give them a certain latitude; that is manifest. Therefore, in considering all these questions of educational qualifications and so on, you have to remember that unless you authorise the Franchise Committee to take these into account, you are restricting and not enlarging their possibility of action.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* I should like, if I may, to ask one question with regard to the conclusion which you, Sir, have read out, and at which you said the sub-Committee had arrived. Does that conclusion imply that the Franchise Committee will have the liberty to consider a variety of franchises for different communities, to arrive at the result that the voting strength shall be proportional to the strength of those communities?

*Chairman:* I do not think that is it. We have to give guidance to the Franchise Committee; they will fill in the details. We are, as it were, the architects, and they are the masons and builders.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* I understand that, but what I should like to know is whether that conclusion gives liberty to the Franchise



Committee to have a different franchise for the different communities with the object of securing equality.

*Chairman:* No. The first sentence says that we recommend that in any given area the franchise qualification should be the same for all communities. We will now proceed with our discussion on the educational qualification.

*Mr. Barooah:* At our last meeting the question arose of whether education should or should not be included among the qualifications giving the right to vote. I am sorry that this question has been raised at all, for I am one of those who think that it should most certainly be included. If the present conditions in India had allowed it, I should have gone much further and should have insisted that education should not only be included as a qualification but should be regarded as an indispensable qualification.

I am afraid, Sir, that I have not been able to appreciate the force of the arguments advanced against education. It is argued that the non-Brahmins in the Madras Presidency are not sufficiently advanced in education, while the Brahmins, on the other hand, are educated almost cent. per cent., and that therefore if education in itself were to be regarded as a qualification for voting in an election the Brahmins would have the upper hand. If in any matter I am less advanced than another, surely the best thing for me to do would be to strive to raise myself to the level of that other; it would certainly not be right for me to pull him down to my level in order to effect equality of status.

I could understand it if steps were taken to spread education among the non-Brahmins as widely as among the Brahmins. I could understand it if it were said that, since the non-Brahmins are not so well educated as the Brahmins, the standard of education which entitled a person to become a voter should be fixed as low as possible so as not to exclude educated non-Brahmins. But I do not understand how it can be said that education should not be a qualification for the franchise simply because a certain community in a certain Province happens to be less advanced in education than another community. Nor am I convinced that the non-Brahmins of Madras are really very backward; on the contrary, I think they are a very progressive community, for they have been able to avoid asking for communal representation, and I feel sure they are sufficiently advanced to maintain their position even if a certain amount of education is considered as an alternative qualification for the franchise. But, even if the non-Brahmins were very backward, I do not see how they would be adversely affected by the inclusion of education as a qualification. Such an inclusion, even if it increases the number of Brahmin voters, cannot increase the Brahmin members in the Council. By reason of their superior numerical strength, it is the non-Brahmins who will lead the elections, and therefore they have nothing whatever to fear.

There is a class of persons such as village schoolmasters and office clerks. These people are able to realise the value of the right to



vote and may be expected to exercise that right with discretion; but most of these people will be excluded from the list of voters if education is not included as one of the qualifications for the franchise. Mr. Joshi would include all these people, if I understand him aright, by joining them with the unrepresented labourers and having a united agitation for universal franchise; but such an agitation would require leaders of far greater abilities. It is only very exceptional men, such as Mr. Joshi himself, who could undertake such a thing. All of us who have had the misfortune to stand for a rural constituency in our country are aware of the huge disadvantages of an uneducated electorate.

I appeal to every member of this sub-Committee therefore, to allow a certain amount of education to be included as an alternative qualification for the franchise. In view of the present state of education in India, the standard of that qualification should be fixed as low as possible; but unless this is done I am sure a large number of very useful and desirable persons will be debarred from voting.

*Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain:* There is one point which I should like to place before the sub-Committee, and it is this. I was somewhat surprised the other day to hear from Mr. Joshi that he did not want education to be a test for the franchise in India. Coming as I do from the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, I want to state that if education is recognised as a qualification it will act as a spur to the compulsory education which is being introduced. To my mind the educational qualification would be the best alternative to universal adult suffrage, because as education advances the franchise will increase and the electorate will increase; and therefore, if we cannot have adult franchise at once, we can at any rate aim at a certain educational qualification which will eventually bring the franchise within the reach of all.

Secondly, this would give a spur to education throughout India. As you know, Sir, India is very backward educationally, but the vote is considered to be a very valuable right, and it is coveted. If this right is coveted I think if education confers it, it will give a spur to the attainment of the necessary educational qualifications.

Towards the close of 1929, as a member of the United Provinces Legislative Council I moved that the franchise for district and municipal boards elections should be reduced. The Council, in spite of the opposition of the Government, accepted my amendment, and the educational franchise has been reduced to the fourth standard; that is to say, anybody who has educational qualifications up to the fourth standard can vote in the district board elections. If education is not one of the qualifications for election to the Council, the difficulty will be that the voters in district board and municipal elections will have education as a qualification, while in the case of Council elections this qualification will not apply. I think, therefore, education to the extent of reading up to the fourth standard should be a qualification for the franchise.



*Mr. Jadhav:* I am one of those unfortunate persons who have had the good or bad fortune to be born in a Province which is affected by the Brahmin and non-Brahmin question. My friends who come from Bengal, Assam and the United Provinces are free from that trouble altogether, and therefore their outlook on this question is naturally quite different from my own.

Education ought to be a necessary qualification; there is no doubt about that. But education does not mean literacy only; a man who carries on agriculture efficiently and earns his own living and maintains a staff is not uneducated simply because he cannot write his name and has to make a mark or sign. Unfortunately for us in India, education has come to be looked on simply as a matter of being able to read and write, and hence we have this insistence on making literacy a test for the franchise.

I should like to point out that in their Report the Simon Commission lay stress on the fact that in the franchise drawn up in 1920 more favour was shown to the urban population than to the rural population, and a larger proportion of urban inhabitants were enfranchised while a very large proportion of the rural population was left without a vote. Are we going to increase that disparity or are we going to do something which will bring these two important sections of the people into a position of equality? We see, Sir, that a very large proportion of the urban population has been enfranchised, and therefore the candidates from urban areas have got a better chance of entering the Council than the candidates from rural areas; and, if education be added as an additional test or as an additional qualification for enfranchisement, a premium will be placed upon the urban areas and the rural areas will be to that extent handicapped.

I do not mean to say that educated people should be excluded; I would, on the other hand, repeat what I said the other day, namely that I stand for universal adult franchise, and I think that every man, whether he is literate or illiterate, and every woman, whether she is able to read and write or not, should have a vote either directly or indirectly through the "Mukhi" system, as I explained before. If the new expert Franchise Committee takes up this principle and adopts it, I think that will be a very fair extension of the right of franchise, because it will go in the direction of universal adult suffrage, and then the educated man will be able to make his influence felt at the poll as well as the illiterate person.

If literacy is made a qualification then, as I have just pointed out, the number of voters in the urban areas will be enormously increased and they will preponderate, so that it will mean establishing an oligarchy of the towns; it will not be a democracy at all.

The conditions in the Madras Presidency and in the Bombay Deccan are quite different, and I regret to observe that they are not easily understandable by outsiders. It is therefore very right for them, from their point of view, to make fun of those who have the



misfortune to voice the claims of the non-Brahmin communities. But I would urge with all the earnestness at my command that this qualification should not be added, because it will tend to increase the disparity that now exists, and therefore it will go against one of the principles which we have already adopted, namely that the increase in the franchise should be such as to give an equal advantage to all communities. If this additional qualification of literacy is added, that principle will have to be thrown to the winds, and I do not know whether by any other reform in the franchise it will be possible to make the proportion just and equitable.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: I should like to point out that so far as Madras is concerned, to which some reference has been made by my friend, the Government of Madras—which consists at present of three non-Brahmin Ministers; there is not a single Brahmin in the Executive Government—in reporting on the proposals of the Simon Commission makes a recommendation which I should like to read to you. This is the relevant portion of what is said by the Government of Madras: “The Commission, however, has found that ‘the present franchise is too limited in scope to provide the material from which to build any adequate scheme of representative Government’, and recommends that a new Franchise Committee be set up with instructions to frame such a scheme as will enfranchise about 10 per cent. of the total population, *i.e.*, more than treble the present number of voters. The chief arguments which lead the Commission to this conclusion are (1) that the present limited franchise operates unfairly as between different classes and creeds, (2) that there is a large number of literate persons who have not got the vote, and (3) that those below the present line of qualification are in many cases just as fit for the vote as those who have it. I am to say that the Government of Madras admit the force of these arguments, especially that based on the number of literates who are not enfranchised.”

Here we have a statement by the Government of Madras. There was a memorandum presented to the Simon Commission by the All-India Conference of Indian Christians. I have been told that the request for the inclusion of literates amongst the voters was strongly pressed. I am only referring to the memorandum presented to the Simon Commission by the All-India Conference of Indian Christians. In that memorandum it was strongly pressed that a large number of their community are now unenfranchised by reason of the fact that they are not in the voters list at present. The request for the inclusion of literates proceeded from them, and my friend knows very well that none of the Brahmin community appeared before the Simon Committee or presented any memorandum. Therefore my submission is that the request came not so much from the Brahmins as from other communities who feel now that a qualification by literacy should be included among the qualifications and one of them is the community to which my friend belongs.



*Lieut.-Col. Gidney:* I would like to refer to this matter of literacy in franchise.—

*Mr. Foot:* On a point of order: are we discussing now the question of literacy, or whether there shall be an educational test? Does that simply mean literacy?

*Lieut.-Col. Gidney:* Yes. It does not affect my community. I agree with my friend Mr. Jadhav that the last Franchise Committee did favour the urban constituents to the disadvantage of the rural, and if it is our desire to extend the franchise to rural areas I think we would be putting a very severe handicap on them if we insisted on what one would be inclined to interpret as an academic educational qualification. In my opinion, I think a man who has a skilled vocational education is sometimes of more importance than some of the graduates, and I think when we talk about an educational qualification we should include in that a vocational education, because a man who is skilled at the plough and the hammer is as useful as the man who just writes his name, and on behalf of the labour classes—though they are all literate—I would throw my support on the demand that education such as is demanded as a qualification should embrace vocational education.

*Mr. Foot:* I do not understand that we have got to exclude a man because he is not able to write his name or because he has not passed a certain standard. The emphasis that has been laid by those in favour of this proposal is that we should have an additional qualification. Therefore it seems to me that the comparison between the man who is skilled in the use of the plough and by the working of his holding and the man who can write his name is not a comparison that is relevant here. He may come in; we want to get him in under the other qualifications, but inasmuch as there is a desire to enlarge the franchise we are looking for means for its enlargement. It may be that we shall come short of adult franchise, but, looking for means for the enlargement of the franchise, surely some such qualification as has been suggested here will be in keeping with the educational advance of India. The advantage of the proposal, as it occurs to me, is this, that it will be a gradually increasing franchise. Of course I do not know what the fourth standard in India does imply. I see the Statutory Commission suggested a fifth class, which I suppose still means a fifth standard. I do not know what is the shade of difference. I should be very strongly opposed to what may be called the academic qualification. I should be very strongly opposed to a qualification that only allowed the cream of the educated classes of India to come in under that franchise. Let us have a qualification that brings in all who have made a start in that direction, all who have come into the educational field, not to the exclusion of the other, but for the enlargement of the franchise so that you may get by every means you can towards the ideal that Dr. Ambedkar has put before this Committee ultimately of an adult franchise.



*Mr. Joshi:* Does not Mr. Foot realise that by adding an educational qualification and fixing a limit to the total number of voters to be made immediately, you are indirectly excluding the franchise of other people?

*Mr. Foot:* In answer to that question, if Mr. Joshi can satisfy me that I am restricting the franchise of other people, I would consider that as being a valid argument; but I do not look at it from the standpoint of restriction, I look upon this proposal as being a proposal for enlargement. My answer to it is this, that supposing this qualification is not inserted, it may be that your people in India will be upon the voters' roll. The advantage of the proposal is that you will have a larger number of people upon the voters' roll. That is the reason why, as far as I can see at present, I think that the special Franchise Committee should not be excluded from taking this qualification test into their consideration.

*Major Stanley:* I do not think there is very much force in Mr. Joshi's argument, because as a matter of fact the limits we have laid down are very elastic ones. The Committee has 15 per cent. of the total population of India with which to play, and I think they can well fit into that the people who will come in under this qualification. But there does seem to be a certain amount of confusion with regard to the meaning of the term "educational qualification". Several of the gentlemen who spoke to-day have spoken as if it was the same as literacy. That does not seem to me at all to be the point of, certainly, the Simon Commission recommendation. We have found in this country—and no doubt you have had the same experience in India—that the literate at the age at which he leaves school may easily become an illiterate at the age at which he gets on the voters' roll, and to me the only satisfactory educational qualification is one of such a standard that it ensures that the boy has had so much educational groundwork that he will remain an educated person not only at the moment he leaves school but by the time he comes on the voters' roll at 21. Apart from that there seems to be two ways in which this question can be looked at. From the theoretical point of view nobody, I think, has advanced any argument against the inclusion of the educational qualification, and indeed I think it is difficult for anybody to do so. The majority of this Committee has turned down adult suffrage immediately, largely on the grounds that the population is not sufficiently educated to have adult suffrage, and it seems to me that if we agree to that we must also agree to the corollary that those who are sufficiently educated to exercise the franchise should be entitled to vote at the earliest possible moment. The argument against this proposal has been entirely on the practical ground that in two Provinces it will give an undue preference to certain communities and to certain interests. As Mr. Jadhav well said, those of us who are not experienced in the affairs of those Provinces are perhaps not well qualified to deal with the matter, but may I point out that the educational qualification and the various other special qualifications which we are afterwards to



discuss are dependent upon the beginning of the clause, the recommendation which we give to this expert Franchise Committee, that they will so far as practicable, not over the whole of India, but in each given area, equalise the communities and the interests. It seems to me if we can in our Report satisfactorily link on to that governing direction the inclusion of an educational qualification, we shall not only be doing what is clearly right in theory, but we shall also enable the Franchise Committee to satisfy the practical fears of certain members. We shall leave it open then to the Franchise Committee to recommend an educational qualification in those provinces where this matter does not constitute any controversy, and in the Provinces where controversy does exist it will be possible for the Franchise Committee to work in, if they so desire, an educational qualification which at the same time, along with the other electoral qualifications which they will lay down, will give as far as practicable equality not only between the various religious communities but, what is perhaps even more important, between the agricultural and the urban interests. I think it would be unwise if we in this Committee were to debar entirely from the purview of the expert Franchise Committee the possibility of even considering an educational qualification, which none of us, I think, will deny is in theory a proper qualification for the exercise of the franchise.

*Chairman:* Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Paul has written me a letter, which I will read to you: "I have been ill from Christmas Eve and cannot attend meeting to-morrow. I am very anxious to make one point.

"It related to Education as a qualification for franchise. My community is very strongly desirous of this as will be seen from what it told the Simon Commission when a deputation of the All-India Christian Conference waited upon it. Let me quote the words; 'We desire that some sort of literacy qualification be also added, for instance, all Vernacular or Anglo-Vernacular Middle passed persons be included in the franchise for provincial councils.'

I am sorry I am unable to write at length just now. The arguments in favour of it are obvious."

I would just like to give you my impression, if I may, in this way. I have told you already that I am a convinced democrat. Democracy differs from autocracy in this respect: Whereas an autocracy may get along very well with an illiterate lot of people (an uneducated lot of people) a democracy cannot long flourish unless the people living in that democracy are educated. Therefore the great problem, as it seems to me, of India for the Indian democracy in the future, is to see that all the people of India get a better education. If that is right, it seems to me that you ought to make education a big thing, and you do enhance the dignity and importance of education considered as an abstract principle if you make it plain that a voter is entitled to be a voter because he is an educated person.



*Mr. Foot:* Amongst other reasons.

*Chairman:* Amongst other reasons. I quite agree with Mr. Foot that we are not seeking in this clause to restrict the franchise; we are seeking to add an additional qualification, and from that point of view in order that we may all stress the importance of education, I would urge you all to sink those practical difficulties—which I fully realise—in order that we may, if possible, give a unanimous vote to demonstrate that we really believe and we do feel that in the education of the masses of India lies the prosperity of the India of the future. I would, therefore, ask you to agree with me in saying that one of the subjects which the Franchise Committee may take into consideration as an additional qualification is that of some standard of education. Personally I rather agree with Major Stanley, that I think the standard which you would exact would be such a standard as would make it improbable that the person who passed that standard might in a few months lapse back and no longer be fit to retain that standard. But that is a point, after all, which the Franchise Committee would consider. Just as we have, in question A, the property qualification, answered it, in order to meet Mr. Joshi's requirements in a very wide way, namely, we recommend that there should be a property qualification, and we use the word "property" in the widest sense so as to include not only landed property but other property, even including income—just as we have said that, so I should suggest to you that we say here that the Franchise Committee ought to favourably take into consideration the additional qualification of an educational qualification.

That is the proposal I make to the Committee. Can I modify that or qualify that in any way so as to meet you? I should like a unanimous conclusion if I could get it.

*Mr. Foot:* May I ask those who are holding up their hands whether they would wish to exclude, as we have said, from the purview of the Expert Franchise Committee, the setting up of this qualification? Surely, if the Expert Franchise Committee would be not alone in taking this into consideration, they could not desire that.

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav:* I suggest that the word "favourably" be left out.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* The Franchise Committee should bear in mind that this qualification should not create undue disparity between the different communities.

*Chairman:* We can make all our representations here subject to that; all our recommendations can be subject to that.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* I am afraid that this recommendation so far as my Province is concerned will be conflicting.

*Chairman:* I think I see the sense. I will draw up these resolutions. We must have another meeting to consider the report. I think I can make it plain that our recommendations here are all



subject to that over-riding consideration which we passed before. So far as possible the ideal system would be to devise such a Franchise that everybody would be represented.

Now we will pass to the next thing “(c) any other qualification, e.g., military service”. I take it we should all agree that in enlarging the franchise as we are going to do we certainly should not want to do away with any of the existing qualifications. The question would rather be here, I should think, as to whether anybody has got any other qualification which they want to add.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney:* Regarding the military qualification, I think in the 1919 Franchise Report it was recommended that the military qualification refers only to service in the Indian or British armies. Each of these armies has a second line of defence, for instance, the Auxiliary Force and the Indian Territorial Force. I consider the franchise should be given to members of those two forces, because they are really performing services in India to-day and are called upon for service abroad in the Indian Territorial Force. I suggest that the franchise be extended to these two lines.

*Mr. Basu:* The only difficulty about that is that the military forces include Cadet Corps attached to schools and colleges, and some of the members are quite young boys.

*Mr. Joshi:* My opposition to this proposal is that I believe we should have one single qualification, namely, that of income, including wages, and that we should not go on adding special qualifications. I oppose military service or any other service as a qualification. I do not agree that military service is more important than service in industry.

*Chairman:* So far as military service is concerned we are faced with the fact that it exists, and the real question is at the moment whether it is practicable to go further and tell the Expert Franchise Committee that they may consider also the Territorial Forces.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney:* And the Auxiliary Forces.

*Chairman:* Is there any objection to telling the Expert Franchise Committee that they may consider the extension of the military qualification to the Auxiliary and Territorial Forces?

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* On the question of any other qualification, I should like to point out that if a person is a voter in any municipal or local board area he ought to be placed in the voters list for the Legislature. The qualifications for the Legislature are certainly higher than those for membership of a local board—at least they are so in Madras. But I would add as a qualification, that of being a voter in a local board area.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* In my Province the qualification for voters for local boards is adult franchise. The elections are held by the villagers gathered together, and the voting is done by show of hands. That will mean adult franchise over again.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* I do not think it would be wise to make such a recommendation, at least so far as concerns my own Province.



We had better leave the matter to the expert Franchise Committee; it would be dangerous to commit ourselves.

*Chairman:* That seems to be the sense of the meeting, that we should not make any special recommendation regarding this matter.

*Mr. Joshi:* On that word "income", Sir, I should like to make it definitely to include wages, paid either in cash or in kind.

*Chairman:* We shall have to consider that on the report stage. I will endeavour to draft something to meet the case.

We now come to 2 (iii), "Do the recommendations made under (i) and (ii) above provide sufficiently for the enfranchisement of women? If not, should any special qualifications be prescribed for them?"

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* There is no such thing as a feminist movement in my country. Both men and women work together and help each other. Our men have been considerate in every way, and both my colleague (Mrs. Subbarayan) and I have every hope—indeed we are almost sure—that all our countrymen assembled here will be ready to give us their full support to whatever proposals we place before this Committee. One member of this Committee has said that he was opposed to any special qualification for women, but I hope that in the light of the arguments which will be advanced he will see his way to recede from that position. Let me point out that a woman is a born administrator. For, although the man is the breadwinner, the virtual ruler of the home is the woman. In that little kingdom she is not only in charge of finance and of home and foreign affairs, but she is also the custodian of the future generation. A good deal of tact and intelligence is needed in order to carry on the administration of that little kingdom, especially if it happens to be a home where the joint family system still prevails. In many instances you will find that a woman can far more intelligently exercise her vote than a man in the same position will be able to do. If a broad franchise is given to women the representation will in many cases be far better. Under existing qualifications women's franchise is more or less a nominal one. Even with the lowering of the property qualification and the introduction of an educational qualification, our position will not be very much improved. Unfortunately there are barely two per cent. of educated women in my country, and although there is a rapid increase in their numbers every day, these things must take time. All the Hindu as well as the Sikh women have hardly any rights of inheritance; they have only the right of maintenance, which does not make them owners of property. In my own Province most of the Muslim families follow the customary law which deprives Muslim women of the rights of inheritance given to them by Islam. In almost all the big landowning families it is maintained that women cannot inherit. Therefore, with these two qualifications, the franchise given to women will remain more or less nominal. We ask for a special qualification, namely, that the wife or widow of a voter, being over 21, should have a vote. This is the qualification,



with the exception of the age, recommended by the Statutory Commission. There it was stated, however, that the age should be 25, whereas we say it should be 21. We think, so far as age limit goes, there should be no distinction between men and women. Such is the qualification which women in this country have enjoyed for nearly ten years. Before universal adult suffrage was introduced in this country, women did enjoy this special qualification. A memorandum signed by women representing all three parties in this country has been sent to members of the Conference advocating the proposal I am bringing before you. We are very grateful to the signatories of that memorandum. We ask for this qualification to be extended to us for the next eleven years, or the next three elections; after that we are quite prepared to take our chance in a fair field and no favour.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I most heartily support the proposal of Begum Shah Nawaz. I think the proposals under (i) and (ii) do not adequately meet the requirements of the women of India. In the matter of property they are at a disadvantage compared with men. In regard to education it is, unfortunately, the fact that less progress has been made with the education of women in India than with that of men, and, therefore, that, too, does not sufficiently cover the case. It is not only a matter of social justice, it is a matter of national well-being that the largest possible number of women should be invited and encouraged to take part in public affairs, and that will make for the social advancement of the whole community. In proof thereof I need not do more than point to England itself, where so much vital public service is rendered by the women of the country. I give my most unqualified and hearty support to the proposal.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* I support what has been fallen from the lips of my sister, Begum Shah Nawaz, and I do so with the utmost pleasure. In my own Province the women do not possess property, the law of inheritance prevents property being passed on to a woman, and it is only in very rare cases that widows have become possessed of property. This has had the result that very few women are enfranchised, in spite of the fact that there is no particular law against their enfranchisement. If, therefore, you widen the property qualification I am afraid it will not help the women, and they will still remain unenfranchised. My fear is that the number of women voters, particularly in the Punjab, will remain stationary unless the proposal is accepted that the wives of voters should be qualified.

*Mr. Joshi:* I was opposed in principle to the addition of qualifications for voters, but I quite recognise that in the case of women special circumstances arise. Unfortunately, I would like my two sisters here to recognise one fact, that the disadvantage is not only in the case of married women and widows, but there is a very small number of women in my country who remain unmarried. It was a matter of surprise to me that my two married sisters should have



appeared to omit that very small class of educated women who choose not to marry.

*Mrs. Subbarayan*: They would come under the educational qualification.

*Mr. Joshi*: Uneducated women, too, may remain unmarried, but why should they remain disqualified? I, therefore, support the proposal of Begum Shah Nawaz if she will accept the addition that a woman of the requisite age shall have the qualification if she is the daughter of a voter. Otherwise I cannot support her proposal. It is a wrong thing to make marriage a qualification for voting.

Then, Sir, I want this sub-Committee to recognise, when they are adding these qualifications, the effect of their proposals on the poorer classes. We have laid it down that 10 per cent. of the population should be enfranchised, and that 10 per cent. may be increased—I do not know to what limit—and also we have laid down a maximum limit of 25 per cent. If you go on adding these qualifications, and in particular this qualification for women, the result will be to keep a higher level of income as a qualification, because we are laying down a maximum limit for the total number of voters, with the result that it is the middle classes and the higher classes who will have a vote, and the lower classes to that extent will be deprived of a vote. If we had no such limit as a 25 per cent. maximum, the addition of women would not have mattered; but, if we add not only all the voters of the middle classes but also their wives to the list, and I am also adding the daughters, to that extent we are adding to the number of voters in the upper classes, and the lower classes will be deprived of votes. On the whole, therefore, I am against adding these other small qualifications.

*Sir Hubert Carr*: It seems to me the mover has well supported the claims she made with regard to these qualifications. We are now, it seems to me, drifting towards the adoption of adult suffrage for women, but not for men. We have all wives and all widows—

*Mrs. Subbarayan*: No, the wives of voters only.

*Sir Hubert Carr*: It will mean that the women will arrive at adult suffrage considerably quicker than the men.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh*: It is only the wives of voters.

*Sir Hubert Carr*: If you make marriage a qualification, you will have women arriving at adult suffrage before men.

*Sir Phiroze Sethna*: On a point of information, if a man has more than one wife or leaves more than one widow, are they to get the benefit of the vote?

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: We wanted to show we were very reasonable; that is why we asked for such a special qualification for widows and wives only. We thought that if a woman is entitled to her husband's status in society she has every right to enjoy the same privileges of citizenship. There is a saying in my language that it is the man who earns but the woman who saves and collects. Both



men and women, therefore, should have the right to enjoy the same privileges.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir* : But what is your answer to the question?

*Begum Shah Nawaz* : The answer to the question is this, that we have been fighting for the abolition of polygamy for years, and in British India we have almost achieved it; but we have to take account of the circumstances that exist at present, and we might be prepared to give two votes to the man who has got two wives. At the same time, we are working for the abolition of polygamy, and we mean to achieve it very soon.

*Mrs. Subbarayan* : I was expecting the question which Sir Phiroze has asked. I think we had better leave that point for the expert Franchise Committee to decide. I do not want this special qualification to be objected to on that ground, and I think I would leave the point to the special Franchise Committee.

*Mr. Basu* : I support the proposal made by Begum Shah Nawaz. With regard to the difficulty to which Sir P. Sethna has referred, Sir Phiroze, of all persons, knows very well that though polygamy is permitted under Hindu and Muhammadan law, in real practice it is an anachronism and does not happen at the present time. The extent to which it occurs is almost negligible. At any rate that is the case in the community to which I belong, the Hindu community. The Hindu community is almost universally monogamist, and cases of polygamy can be regarded only as of historic interest.

With regard to the claim made by the lady Delegates on this sub-Committee, if we require from women the same qualifications as are required from men we shall practically be trying to establish the theory that the women should go out of their homes, or rather break up their homes, and, like men, engage in the ordinary concerns of life for earning their bread, and engage in the affairs of the world in the same way as men. A great many men will object to having their homes broken up like that and will object to the women engaging in pursuits to acquire an income or to acquire the other qualifications which would give her the franchise. Having regard to the present state of society in India and probably elsewhere, it is necessary that the women should take upon themselves the responsibility of running the nation in the way they have done in the past and are doing in the present; but because they immolate themselves to that extent they should not be deprived of their votes.

That is a fact which is being gradually recognised everywhere, and for the sake of the future of India it is quite time we recognised that fact as well. As Begum Shah Nawaz has pointed out, in matters of domestic economy the women play a very important part in Indian life, and that is a fact which every Indian and those who study India from outside will have to recognise. The qualification of the husband is one criterion which enables you to fix with some amount of certainty the question of whether the wife should have the vote, and therefore when the Begum asks that if the husband has one of the qualifications which entitles him to be on the elec-



toral roll, his wife, or his widow, should be entitled also to come on to the electoral roll, I think that is a proposition which we should accept.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney:* I have very few words to say on this matter. Speaking for the women of my community, we to a certain extent suffer from the same disability as you do, and I am sorry Begum Shah Nawaz has not correctly read what I said on this matter when we had our first meeting. I whole-heartedly support the proposal, and to show the Begum the position I take up I should like to read what I said at the former meeting. I said this: "There must be no difference whatever in the status of men and women. They must be given equal political rights. I consider the world in general and India in particular has neglected its women-folk and their great power for good, with the result that we are witnessing the reaction to-day. Look at the lightning speed with which Indian women are awakening to a proper sense of their power and position. I say we must give woman her rightful place in the body politic of our Motherland—India." I further go on to say "As regards women, I leave the details to the special Franchise Committee which, I take it, will soon be appointed to visit India and report on the franchise as a whole. I consider, however, that the new constitution for India should at the very outset provide special measures by which a certain proportion of seats in the various legislatures shall be reserved for women, and that it should be embodied in the Statute that sex should be no disqualification."

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* I have full sympathy with the underlying objects of the lady Delegates, and I fully recognise that under any franchise the same percentage of women will not be enfranchised as of men, because under the property franchise they cannot get the same percentage, nor can they under the educational franchise. Therefore I quite recognise that some method will have to be considered whereby over and above the ordinary franchise women shall be allowed to get the vote. But when it comes to giving the wife or wives of every voter a vote, I do not know how many Delegates here realise that you will be giving that man a double or treble vote. In political matters especially in India, it will be the husband who will dictate to the wife as to how she is going to vote. If I may, I should like to tell the Begum that we must face realities; we must not try to imagine what we want the conditions to be in India in regard to women; we must visualise them as they are. I can speak frankly. It is all very well in this sub-Committee to say that in India the woman rules the house; we know very well to what extent she does so. It is all very well also to say that she controls the purse or that she has any influence, in a large number of cases among the poorer classes, over her husband. These are all platitudes, and we have to face realities. Therefore, Sir, if you give the wife of every voter a vote you are doubling his voting capacity, and so I have some sympathy with the argument placed before you by Mr. Joshi.



If you are limiting the franchise to 25 per cent. of the population, and if 4 per cent. of the population have already got the vote, as they have in my Presidency—3·9 per cent.—then without any further broadening of the franchise you have doubled your vote, because in the majority of cases the voter has already got a wife.

*Mr. Jadhav*: And a widowed mother in half the cases.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Therefore without any broadening of the franchise you have already doubled it. My friend Sir P. C. Mitter says most of the women will not go to the poll, but we cannot take that for granted. If you say you will grant them the franchise on the ground that they will not go to the poll, where will that argument lead you? We must take it that they will, although I know the difficulties of bringing them there, even in a city like Bombay, in the case of those who have got the franchise already.

Therefore you are doubling the franchise without broadening it. I should like this question much further examined before we commit ourselves to any principle. I am in sympathy with the main principle of giving a larger number of women the vote than would be entitled to it on any franchise that may be chosen. That is only fair; but when it comes to a narrow instruction of this kind, saying this sub-Committee is of opinion that it is advisable to give the wife of every voter a vote, I must draw the line. I want more time for consideration; I want more details; I want more figures. I should like to examine a good many witnesses, witnesses who can speak with authority on the subject, before I come to any definite conclusion on an important question of this kind.

I am quite prepared to include in our report an opinion that the vote for women should be considered on a broader basis, on broader lines, than a vote for men, and that some additional qualification may be added so as to bring up their average and make it a little higher than it would otherwise be were the franchise the same for women as for men. I am quite prepared to give the Franchise Committee instructions to examine that question and make recommendations, but I am not prepared, and for very important reasons, to commit myself, nor should I like this sub-Committee to be committed, to the main principle just enunciated by the Begum.

I do not, I am afraid, follow her quite clearly. Is her recommendation the same as that made by the Simon Commission? Is that what she wants?

*Sir Phiroze Sethna*: No, she wants to go further still, and reduce the age to 21.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: She wants the age reduced to 21, and the vote given to all wives of men who have the vote. That is the recommendation of the Simon Commission, *plus* a reduction in the age to 21.



*Chairman:* If I follow it, the Simon Commission's recommendation was limited to the wives of those holding the property qualification. The Begum wants it to apply, I think, to the wives of all voters.

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* The Simon Commission recommended the giving of a vote to wives, over 25, of voters, as well as to widows. We want the age reduced to 21.

*Major Stanley:* The Report of the Simon Commission confines itself to the wives of voters who have the property qualification.

*A Member:* But now there are going to be other qualifications; then there was only the property qualification.

*Chairman:* There was military service. As I understand it, the difference between the proposals of the Begum and those of the Simon Commission are these: (1) she says 21 should be the age, instead of 25; and (2) she says the qualification should not be merely whether the husband possesses the property qualification, but any qualification.

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* In our memorandum we have restricted it to the property qualification.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* What is your proposal?

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* That the wife of a voter who has the property qualification should have the vote. The only variation we make is in regard to age.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* That does not seem to be very logical, because we have added an educational qualification. If a man obtains the vote owing to an educational qualification, his wife will not get the vote; a man who has the vote owing to military service will be in the same position; his wife will not have the vote. It will be only the wives of those with the property qualification who will get the vote.

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* What I said in my speech was that I wanted only the wives of voters with the property qualification to have the vote. There is no right of inheritance for women so far as the Hindu community is concerned and so far as the Sikh community is concerned; there is only the right of maintenance, and in my Province most of the families follow customary law, and therefore the women cannot inherit property. That is why I asked that the wife of a voter under the property qualification should have the vote.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* I follow the argument, but the result goes much further. It assumes that the wife of every voter is going to inherit, and therefore she would have had a property qualification in any other part of the world. I have never heard of any system of franchise anywhere where the wife is given the vote because the husband happens to have one. I suggest the main principle be enunciated in the report, it being left to the Franchise Committee to work out the details. It would be very risky for



this sub-Committee to express any definite opinion on this important point.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq:* We feel we should make one point quite clear to this sub-Committee. You will notice, Sir, that the recommendations we are making for the broadening of the franchise, in our attempt to bring as large a number of persons as possible on to the electoral roll, have the effect of creating a much greater disparity between voters belonging to my community and voters belonging to other communities than existed before. I do not object to that, but the proposal that has now been made will place my community in a position of very great disadvantage. *Purdah* is no part of the religion of Islam. As a matter of fact in Muhammadan countries the females take part in the daily life of the people at least far more than they do at present in India. In my Province this custom of *purdah* had been established so firmly on my community that it has practically become part of the Muslim religion, and I can say, without fear of contradiction, that there is only a small microscopic fraction of the females belonging to the labouring classes who cannot afford to come out of *purdah* to do their own work. The great bulk of the population do not come out of *purdah*. Unless there is a universal adult franchise, I oppose this proposal unless the separate electorates of my community are retained. In that case I do not mind any advance made in the direction to give women their rights; but if you take literates and broaden the franchise in this respect I submit that the most you would give would be practically dead votes. We wish that you will note in the report of this Committee that the assent we are giving is subject to the one great condition of separate electorates. If they remain we assent. If they are taken away we oppose, because it must be looked at from a different point of view.

*Sir R. Hamilton:* It required a world war to get the women's franchise in this country, and I think for this Committee to try to decide the question of women's franchise in India is rather outside our capacity. For that reason, and also for the reason that we in England are necessarily very ignorant of the conditions in India, it would be far more advisable for us to confine ourselves to making a general recommendation to the Franchise Committee to study this question with a view to increasing female suffrage. Personally I should hesitate very much to subscribe to such a specific recommendation as has been put forward by the ladies this morning. Though I am entirely in favour of increasing the power of woman in the political world, I think it is a matter which India must settle for itself, and for that reason I would support what has been said that there should be a general recommendation to the Franchise Committee to study this question with a view to enlarging the women's franchise.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* I agree with the last speaker, for this reason. I believe my sister Delegates will appreciate that I am making the recommendation more in their interests—more in the interests



of widening the women voters. In my Province, out of 14 million breadwinners, three millions are women. In spite of that there are very few women voters, and the real reason is not so much what the Simon Commission apprehended and what my sister Delegates apprehend (I am confining my remarks to my Province) but because of the want of education on the part of the women. So if you have it on that basis it may be that the number of women voters will still remain very small.

On the other hand there is a danger; the danger is this: supposing you fix the property qualification lower than what it is to-day, giving votes to the wife or widow of each voter will at least make it double; in some cases quadruple, or even five times. The Muhammadan is allowed to marry four wives. For the Hindu there is no limit, but speaking of my Province I do not think you can point to one person of the Hindus who has more than one wife, and the Muhammadans two. This system is going down; they are not marrying so many wives which perhaps they used to do before.

It would be rather dangerous to lay that down; you may be doubling the voters, and doubling the voters many of whom will never go to the poll. Perhaps we may be giving the woman more effective representation. They may have special educational qualifications, and we want that class of woman for social services for the uplifting of their less fortunate sisters. Supposing you reduce the franchise qualification, the apprehension of some of my friends opposite may be realised that more of the middleclass people, better educated, would have two votes. So that looking at the general object which my sister Delegates have in view I think we should recommend that attention be drawn to the question of women franchise and leave it to the Franchise Committee.

*Divan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao* : I should like to speak upon one point. I am personally fully in sympathy with any movement which aims at encouraging a larger participation by women in public life, but there is a difficulty, as has been pointed out, and I should like this Committee to study the figures given by the Simon Commission which are incorporated on page 5 of this Memorandum. I understand the figures are from the Simon Commission, Vol. 1, page 191: The proportion of female electors to the adult female population is less than 1 per cent., and the proportion of male electors to the adult male population is 10.4 per cent. If we adopt the suggestion which has been made it will really mean that we shall have 20.8 per cent. of the population enfranchised, men and women included, and since the majority of the Committee here seems to be inclined to restrict the total number of people to be enfranchised to 25 per cent. it will really mean sacrificing the rights of the working classes and of the poorer classes. It will mean a very severe restriction on the working classes, and I think that that is a point which we must bear in mind in this connection.



*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: That is not 10 per cent. of the total population.

*Mr. Foot*: May I ask the Begum Shah Nawaz, would it be a part of her case that this condition of the age of 21 of a woman who is the wife of a voter—a woman who is 21 years of age the wife of a voter, or a woman 21 years of age and the widow of a voter—would she apply that to all the Provinces?

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: Yes.

*Mr. Foot*: There are differences in the Provinces; the conditions vary considerably. The question to which Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq drew attention I suppose applied particularly to some Provinces and not to others. Is it part of her case that there should be the submission of this proposal to be applied to all the Provinces?

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: All the Provinces.

*Mr. Basu*: The difficulty about purdah women is that we know that in practice there are special booths for purdah women, and that special arrangements are made for recording their votes.

*Mrs. Subbarayan*: I would like to point out that the method put forward was suggested by the deputation of three leading Indian ladies to the Simon Commission at Lucknow. We have also discussed the matter with some of the Indian ladies who are now in London who are taking an active part in the public life of India, and they agree with our proposal.

Upon the point of giving a husband two votes, I believe that that objection was raised in this country too when women were first given the franchise, and in actual practice it was found that this criticism did not have any foundation. I do not think it is quite complimentary to the men to say that they would have two votes, and we should remember that the vote, after all, has an educative value and that women can and will increasingly hold their own views in course of time.

Another point I would like to submit to you, Sir, is that we do admit that this is not a perfect scheme; nor is it going to be a permanent scheme. We only suggest it as a stepping-stone to increasing the votes for women until we have adult franchise.

As regards Bengal, may I point out that in spite of the laws of inheritance there the voting strength of the women is '3 per cent. of the adult population.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: With my suggestion you could have one hundred times those number of votes.

*Mrs. Subbarayan*: There are only a few women who have got the vote. Women are shy to go to the polling station. But when there are a large number of women voters they will feel encouraged to go.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: Would you make it compulsory for women to vote?



*Mrs. Subbarayan* : No, I would also say when the women electors are very few in number, they realise that they cannot count for much in a large electorate. If their number were large enough to be a powerful factor in an election, all the candidates and their supporters would make every effort to induce the women to go to the poll.

*Sir P. C. Mitter* : If there are 3 millions who are eligible for votes and if the number of voters is so small, I am pointing out something under which you can do better, that a general recommendation will perhaps serve your purpose better. Of course you can decide for yourself, but that is my view.

*Mr. Jadhav* : I support any proposal to give woman the vote and to make her equal with man, but the proposal that has been placed before us will increase the number of voters at least two and a half times, because in the case of a man dying his son and his son's wife will get a vote automatically—and his widow. I do not state this fact here in order to oppose the suggestion. As I have said, I am in entire sympathy with the proposal, but I want to add a word of warning that by the adoption of this system the number of voters will be increased to such an extent that the expert Franchise Committee which will be appointed will have very little left to consider, and the other methods of broadening the franchise should be changed. I would for the present again reiterate that I stand for the universal adult franchise, and if the scheme that was proposed here and placed before this Committee by the Marquess of Zetland be accepted that persons who are now on the electoral roll should remain on the electoral roll, but that the other population which is not enfranchised should be represented by their representatives, all these obligations, I think, will be done away with, and all the communities that are now asking for the vote will be satisfied. The labourers will get their vote in the proportion of 5 per cent. at least; the women will get their vote to the extent of 5 per cent. at least, and so on; there will be a gradual advance, and in that way we can very easily work up to our ideal which has been accepted by this Committee of universal adult franchise.

*Chairman* : May I suggest this for your consideration. On the one hand, I feel myself in very considerable difficulty. After all, I know nothing about India at all, and I read in the Government of India Report these words: "The view was that the enfranchisement of women goes deep into the social system and the susceptibilities of India, and is, therefore, a question which can only prudently be decided in accordance with the wishes of Indians constitutionally expressed." That view is bound to have some weight with me in my position, knowing nothing about India. On the other hand, I frankly say that I am tremendously prejudiced in favour of women's suffrage, and I will give you our experience. I speak for myself; I only give you impressions. Until we had adult suffrage we had women voting by virtue of being the wife of her husband when she reached the age of 30. People



laughed at it for a long time and simply said that the man had got two votes. I am inclined to think that in the first stages it very often did mean that. But the result of having a vote was that the women began to take such an interest in politics that if it was true to say in the early stages it simply meant duplicating the husband's vote, it certainly was not true after a few months, and it certainly is not true to-day. The added interest and educative value of the vote has been proved time after time in this country through giving women the vote. On the one hand, therefore, I feel very much tempted to say that Sir Robert Hamilton has suggested the right course, seeing that this Committee as it is at present constituted cannot really attempt to solve this question or to give any definite ruling. But, I for myself, with my prejudices, do not want to merely pass the matter over to the Franchise Committee. I would, at any rate, like to give the impression on my mind, and suggest this to you. Might we not do this: we can answer the questions submitted to us, and to the question "Do the recommendations made under (1) and (2) above provide sufficiently for the enfranchisement of women?" we can answer "No." Then, "if not, should any special qualifications be prescribed for them?" we can answer "Yes." Then we can send the matter to the Franchise Committee, but send it with some comment of this sort: "At the present time the number of women voters is something like a quarter of a million in six Provinces as against nearly  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions male voters." Might we not then say: "We have looked at those figures. We regard any franchise system which renders possible such a great disparity as that between the two sexes wholly unsatisfactory." With that general statement of our views, refer the matter to the Franchise Committee, in order that the Franchise Committee may work out what is the best method to adopt in order to approximate much more closely the number of women voters to the number of male voters. If I may suggest that to you, I think it would not be a bad principle that we should refer the matter to the Franchise Committee by putting in some statement of that sort, and indicating quite plainly what our views were on the general principle. I should like to propose that, if that would meet with the approval of the Committee.

*Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain:* I should like to say something about the value of the vote to those people who are not sufficiently advanced. Therefore my contention is that there should be a sliding scale for the enfranchisement of women, to be followed as the years go on, and that we should recommend in this sense to the Expert Franchise Committee. In the case of any man who possesses a qualification which entitles him to vote, his wife and daughter should not be entitled to vote unless he possesses three times that qualification.

*Begum Shah Nawaz:* May I ask you to include these words: "that the recommendation of the Statutory Commission should be taken into consideration as well as the proposal made in this Committee by the ladies"?



*Chairman*: I think it is quite reasonable that the Franchise Committee should be asked to take into consideration the report of the Simon Commission.

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: One member of the Committee said that in the rural classes the condition of women was not so good as we have been trying to show that it is. May I point out that there are nine million more men than women in my country, and that the women is considered to be far more precious in a poor man's house than in a rich man's house. In one district in my Province there is one woman to ten men, and in that district a woman is considered more precious than any property.

*Chairman*: We will frame a recommendation on the lines of this discussion.

Now we come to the next topic; which is plural voting. I would suggest for your consideration that a convenient way to consider this matter is, first, to ask. Are any alterations required in the qualifications in the existing special constituencies? Secondly, should a voter entitled to vote in a special constituency be permitted to vote also in a general constituency for which he possesses the required qualification? I must add that what we do here will be to a certain extent governed by the Minorities Committee. I submit this to you for your consideration and approval.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq*: The question of the retention of special constituencies is not a matter for the consideration of this Committee at the present stage. In so far as special constituencies are allowed to remain, the point of view just suggested by the Chairman may be considered, but I want the Committee to understand that this is entirely subject to the condition that the retention of special constituencies is a question to be considered, not by us, but by some other sub-Committee.

*Chairman*: I do not think we can consider the question of special constituencies at all. There is, unfortunately, a considerable overlap in our work. The only useful way to carry on our discussion is to assume that the special constituencies as they exist to-day are going to continue.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I think we should leave out the first of the questions you have suggested and confine our attention to the second. We may take it for granted that there should be special constituencies, and the question is under what conditions should a man allowed to vote in such constituencies.

*Chairman*: May I take it that the Committee is agreeable to what Sir Cowasji has said. Let us proceed on the assumption that there are to be special constituencies, and that the special constituencies will have some franchise which we are not going to discuss.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I find considerable difficulty in giving my considered judgment on this point unless I know what the special constituencies are going to be. Take the constituencies formed by Chambers of Commerce and the like. In my Province there are



five special British seats on the local Legislative Council. When we know what the special constituencies will be the matter ought not to be very difficult, but at present there are many special constituencies of the kind. I suggest that this sub-heading should be referred as a special point to the relevant sub-Committee.

*Chairman:* Is it the feeling of the Committee that we should not deal with either of these matters, because, just as we cannot usefully consider what the franchise for a special constituency should be unless we know what the constituency itself is going to be, so also we cannot usefully consider whether there should be plural voting unless we know all the circumstances, the nature of the special constituency, and the nature of the voting in that constituency? Is it the view of the Committee that the Expert Franchise Committee is the body which should take this into consideration?

*Mr. Jadhav:* May I point out that at present plural voting is allowed. A man may have a vote, for example, in a university constituency and also in a general constituency on a property qualification. Again, a man may have a vote by virtue of his membership of the Mill-owners' Association, or in these other special constituencies in Bombay. I do not think there is any harm in allowing plural voting under such circumstances, but a man ought not to have different votes for the same sort of qualification—say for holding property in two places. Also, if an educational qualification is added, a man ought not to have a vote for property as well as education.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* A good deal of material appears in the memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission by the Government of India which shows that a considerable volume of opinion exists with regard to the representation of various special constituencies. For example, in regard to trade and commerce, several proposals have been put forward referring to special constituencies. Again, as regards the landlords, the Simon Commission proposed that the landlords' constituencies in the Provinces and Legislative Assembly should be abolished. Either this Committee or the other Committee will have to decide whether the landlords' constituencies should be retained.

*Chairman:* We cannot decide it. The difficulty is as to whether the special constituencies should be retained or not, and that is plainly not a matter for this Committee. When it has been decided whether the special constituencies should be retained—that being a matter for the Minorities Committee—the question as to what the franchise should be would be a matter for this Committee. Is it not the most business-like thing to say that we decline to discuss the matter, but we send it to the Expert Franchise Committee who will be able to deal with the whole of the question? In any event we could only deal with half of it.

*Mr. Chintamani:* But, Sir, it should not be impossible for us to make a general recommendation that, as far as possible, plural



voting should be avoided, as it is undesirable. Sometimes it is possible for a man to have five or six votes in different constituencies. I think it is undesirable that one person should have so many votes. At the present moment a person who could be a voter in two general constituencies has to make a choice between the two. In the same manner the Government could see that one name did not occur in more than one special constituency. We do not, of course, know what will be the character of the special constituencies of the future, but subject to that, I think it is up to us to make a recommendation to the Expert Franchise Committee in general terms against the principle of plural voting.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* When we are in better possession of the facts we can deal with it more effectively. I do not want this question to be ruled out. All I ask is that it should be considered in some other place where the facts will be forthcoming.

*Chairman:* Does the Committee as a whole agree to this course, subject to the point made by Mr. Chintamani? Are we agreed that this matter should be passed on to the expert Franchise Committee with a recommendation against plural voting? The real question is whether we ought or ought not to add any recommendation in that sense. I feel that it is very difficult for us to make any recommendation at all unless we go into the whole of the facts, and, on the other hand, it is very difficult for us to go into the whole of the facts because half of them are outside the terms of our reference to deal with. Therefore I think we had better pass this matter over quite generally.

*Mr. Chintamani:* But I should like you to include in your report a statement that several members of this sub-Committee are of opinion that plural voting should be as far as possible discouraged.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* In some constituencies plural voting may be advisable, and if Mr. Chintamani presses his point, I think it should also be stated that some members of the sub-Committee are in favour of plural voting under certain circumstances.

*Chairman:* Shall we say that we have not gone into the question of the franchise for the special constituencies, as the question as to what special constituencies remain is not one for us? We recommend that the Expert Franchise Committee should take the matter in hand, and make such arrangements as are necessary for the special constituencies that remain. With regard to plural voting, some of our members have expressed the view that so far as practicable this should be abolished; others that it should remain, but without a full knowledge of the facts we think it not advisable to attempt any recommendation.

*Chairman:* Following my usual practice, I will read out to you a very rough summary I have put down as the result of our deliberations on these questions, coming under No. 2 of the Heads of Discussion, the general basis of franchise. On (ii), "Assuming



that age is not to be the only qualification, should there be (a) a property qualification " and so on, I have said this:

" This sub-Committee consider that there should be a property qualification for the franchise, and that in this connexion the word 'property' should be understood in its widest sense as including not only the ownership of landed property but also the occupation of landed property or house property or the receipt of income or wages, whether in cash or kind."

On (b) I say:

" This sub-Committee are of opinion that the Franchise Commission should consider the possibility of framing a suitable educational qualification as an additional qualification for the franchise, bearing in mind the idea enunciated under heading 2 (i)."

That is the heading we have already dealt with.

On (c) I say:

" This sub-Committee agree that the Franchise Commission should retain the existing military service qualification and consider its extension so as to include service in the Auxiliary and Territorial Forces."

On (iii) I say:

" This sub-Committee observe that under the existing franchise the number of women voters is infinitesimal as compared with that of men. No system of franchise can be considered as satisfactory or as likely to lead to good government where such a great disparity exists between the two sexes. We do not think the recommendations we have already made will reduce this disparity, nor do we think that they provide sufficiently for the enfranchisement of women. We, therefore, agree that special qualifications should be prescribed for women, but we feel that in this sub-Committee we have not sufficient knowledge of the facts of the situation to qualify us in attempting to formulate these special qualifications. We therefore recommend that the Franchise Commission should devote special attention to this question in the light of all the evidence available, including the recommendations of the Statutory Commission and the suggestion made in this sub-Committee that the age limit mentioned in the proposals of the Statutory Commission should be altered from 25 to 21."

On (iv) I say:

" This sub-Committee are of opinion that the franchise qualifications for special constituencies are inseparably bound up with the nature of those constituencies. We are not empowered to consider that point, nor are we in possession of information as to what special constituencies are contemplated. These questions require examination by a competent body. So far as the franchise aspect has been discussed in this sub-Committee, a division of opinion has shown itself as to the



desirability of permitting a voter qualified in both a general and a special constituency to vote in both."

I shall, of course, circulate this, and we shall have to have a meeting to consider these things, but I think that fairly summarises the conclusions at which we have arrived.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: There is one point which I should like to mention. You refer in that report to No. 2 (i). I understand by that that you are alluding to the principle which has been enunciated whereby the Franchise Commission should be asked so to adjust the franchise that the different communities will be represented on the electoral roll in proportion to their population.

*Chairman*: Yes.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I think that is an impracticable and impossible suggestion to make, if I may say so, and I reserve to myself the right to raise this point when the report is under discussion at the final stage.

*Chairman*: Certainly. Everybody reserves his right to bring these points up again.

*Sardar Sampuran Singh*: I wish to associate myself with what Sir Cowasji Jehangir has said.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney*: My objection is the same as Sir Cowasji's.

*Chairman*: We now come to No. 3. We have really dealt with the first point: "Detailed franchise qualifications. It will presumably be left to a Franchise Committee or Committees"—we have now called it a Franchise Commission—"to define the exact qualifications necessary to bring about the result desired under 1 in accordance with the principles recommended under 2." Then: "Are there in the opinion of the sub-Committee any other considerations which it is particularly desirable that the Franchise Committee should bear in mind?"

One occurs to me; that is to say the question of rural constituencies. There is a danger we have been told, of the over-representation of urban opinion and the under-representation of rural opinion. That may be a matter which you may think the expert Franchise Committee should bear in mind, and it has been suggested to me also that disqualification is a topic which ought to be considered. There may be others, but those two will certainly be in order here.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: The residential qualification might be considered.

*Chairman*: That might be considered also.

*Mr. Chintamani*: Are you speaking only in respect of the franchise?

*Chairman*: Yes.

*Mr. Chintamani*: There are two franchises, for urban and rural.



*A Member:* In most of the Provinces.

*Mr. Chintamani:* What are we to consider?

*Chairman:* We can consider only any point as far as it relates to franchise.

*Mr. Foot:* The disparity between urban and rural representation?

*Chairman:* Certainly, if you consider there is a disparity between urban and rural representation, which disparity can be surmounted by some adjustment of the franchise, that is a matter which we can consider here. If you say, however, that it cannot be dealt with in that way but must be considered by some method of separate representation, for instance, that does not come within our province here at all, of course.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I am glad, Sir, you have rendered unnecessary any observations on the quantity of representation of urban and rural areas, as being a point beyond the province of this sub-Committee. In my opinion there is no relation whatever between the franchise and the amount of representation; it concerns the number of voters for a particular candidate in an urban area and in a rural area, but it does not affect the proportions of urban and rural representation in the Legislature.

As regards the franchise, the nature of the taxes or cesses or rates included in urban and rural qualifications is quite different not only as between one Province and another but in the same Province. Also when rental is taken as one of the qualifications for the franchise, the rents paid by occupiers of houses in towns are naturally enormously more than anything that has to be paid in rural areas. A certain difference between the franchise in respect of these two areas is inevitable, nor is there, in my opinion, a grievance to anybody that that should be so, because, as I have said, it does not determine the relative representation of the two. Unless it is stated that this sub-Committee will make a representation or express an opinion on the relative amounts of representation which the urban and rural areas should have, it will not be necessary for me to say anything more, and I believe that, as has now been stated from the Chair, that question will not be considered by us.

*Mr. Foot:* There is one question on which I should like to have some guidance. When the Southborough Franchise Committee went into the question, I understand they made it a deliberate matter of policy to make the franchise arrangements such that the towns were more largely represented than the country districts. A quotation from the Report of the Southborough Committee is given on page 58 of the Report of the Statutory Commission, and that quotation is as follows: "The qualifications adopted by us will result in enfranchising a substantially higher proportion of the urban than of the rural population, a result which we believe to be justified by the higher standard of wealth and intelligence in the towns." That deliberate policy adopted by the Southborough



Franchise Committee has now been in operation for some years, and some of us who belong to the British Delegations would like guidance and comment on that in the light of the experience of the years which have elapsed since effect was given to that policy. I see that adverse comment has been made on that policy in different quarters, and I should like to know whether our brethren from India can tell us if, as a result of ten years' experience, that policy of the Southborough Franchise Committee has been justified, or whether steps ought now to be taken by the new Committee which we propose to set up to correct that difference.

The interest of India, of course, is mainly agricultural; as I understand it, nine-tenths of the population of India are directly associated with agriculture, and the whole community is dependent on the success of agriculture. If that is so, I cannot understand why we should not make our franchise arrangements such that you will call in that great rural element of your country to take its full and adequate and commensurate share in the future development of the country's interests. That is a matter on which I should like some guidance from those who can speak with an experience which we cannot claim.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* May I ask for guidance on a question of procedure. You have told us, Sir, that the question of the separation of rural from urban constituencies is not before us; but in my opinion that is a very important matter, and I expect it will come before some sub-Committee.

*Chairman:* It is not before us, anyway.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* I should like to bring to your notice the fact that that ought to come before some sub-Committee. On the point that is actually before us, and with regard to the remarks which Mr. Foot has made, I should like to say this. The difficulty is not that the urban voters do not take any interest; the urban voters do take an interest, and if possible the franchise may even be lowered as regards the urban voters. They have had 50 years' experience of municipal elections, and they are better educated and so on. One of the difficulties is to get the rural voters to come and vote, and lowering the rural franchise will not touch that point, which I at any rate believe to be of great importance. The difficulty will not be met by lowering the franchise for rural voters, but on the other hand that will bring in a class of voter who will be more under the influence of the moneylenders, the young men or the police. The better representation of rural voters has been touched on by the Marquess of Zetland, and his proposal may be one way of ensuring such representation. I want to make it clear, however, that in my judgment the lowering of the franchise will not meet the difficulty to which reference has been made.

*Mr. Jafarullah Khan:* May I, coming from another Province, try to give my own impressions with regard to the matter now under discussion. I have not, of course, any intimate knowledge of the working of the franchise qualifications in any Province



except the Punjab, and all that I wish to submit on this question—a question on which I feel rather strongly—must be taken to be confined in its application to the Punjab.

There is no doubt that the qualifications for the franchise, as laid down at present, are uniform for both areas in this sense, that wherever an individual possesses one of those qualifications that are laid down in the list he comes on to the register no matter whether he is actually resident in an urban area or in a rural area. But, considering that certain kinds of qualifications—for instance, ownership or occupation of immovable property of a certain value—may be expected to be found generally only in certain kinds of areas, the qualifications laid down readily classify themselves into urban qualifications and rural qualifications.

With regard to my Province, the main rural qualification which would entitle a person to come on to the register is the qualification which may be described as the land revenue-paying qualification, the qualification which belongs to a man owning agricultural land, which pays so much annually in land revenue. It is extremely difficult to find in the villages of the Punjab anybody—or at any rate people in large numbers—who owns, for instance, houses in the village which would qualify him or them as voters; that qualification is mainly an urban qualification. On the other hand, this ownership of agricultural land is a rural qualification. These are the two main qualifications.

But a difference will at once appear when the two are compared. In urban areas a person who owns immovable property of a certain value obtains a vote, as well as a person who receives rent from urban immovable property up to a certain extent—up to Rs. 8 a month—as well as the person who pays the rent; they all become qualified. That is to say, if a room in a house is let by “A”, the owner of the room, to “B”, at a rental of Rs. 8 a month, both “A” and “B” in the urban area will get a vote. Suppose, on the other hand, a man owns agricultural land in a rural area which pays the necessary amount of land revenue—Rs. 25 a year in my Province—he alone would qualify in respect of that property.

*Mr. Foot:* And not the tenant?

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* That is the first distinction which appears immediately. A man who has taken land on lease in respect of which Rs. 100 a year is being paid as land revenue does not qualify in the rural area as a voter, whereas in the urban area the occupation of property of Rs. 8 rental value gives a right to go on the register, as well as the ownership of that property.

To make a comparison, property which, in an urban area, would bring in a rental of about Rs. 8 a month would be far less in value than land in a rural area in respect of which Rs. 25 a year is being paid as land revenue; so that, without going into further details, it may be taken as established—with regard to the Punjab at least—that a much lower qualification in the urban will qualify a



man to go on the register than is the case in a rural area. The rural qualification for a man to get on the register is a very high one, apart altogether from the fact that tenants as such, apart from hereditary tenants, are not entitled to go on the register by virtue of the occupation of any quantity or area of land.

This gives us a very disproportionate percentage of rural voters to the rural population as compared with the percentage of urban voters to the urban population, and that is a matter on which I feel rather strongly, because an overwhelming majority of even the representatives of my Council feel very strongly that this disparity should disappear. It has been said that the distinction which the Southborough Committee sought to make, and deliberately sought to make, was justified by the fact that you get urban voters going to the polls far more easily than rural voters. With all respect to Sir Provash Mitter, I think that is not correct. No doubt the proportion of the actual number of votes polled in the rural areas is slightly less as compared with the proportion of urban voters going to the polls, but if you examine the conditions, if you visualise that every urban voter has got the polling station almost at his door, and that all he has got to do is to spare a few minutes on the polling day to work over to the polling booth and vote, and go back to his work, and that with regard to a rural voter he has often got to take a long journey and provide his own food and miss his day's work, then this slightly lower proportion is negligible, and if it cannot be said that having regard to those conditions the rural voter has really shown a greater interest in these matters than the urban voter, it can certainly be said that he has shown at least an equal amount of interest. Besides, there is one great consideration, that with regard to this question of tenants and occupiers of land in my Province, they come from exactly the same class from which the ordinary peasant proprietor comes, and there is no reason why a tenant should not be admitted to the vote occupying the same amount of land, whereas the landlord who is merely getting the rent of that land should become qualified. But apart from these detailed considerations, my solution is that the experience of the last ten years has shown that there is no reason for maintaining the distinction whereby a much larger number of urban residents should be enfranchised as compared with the rural voters, and that this Committee should definitely make a recommendation that this disparity should now disappear.

Of course, I have not ventured upon the question as to what should be the qualification for representation of rural areas in the Legislatures, for with that we are not here concerned.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* You see, it says "Owners or occupancy tenants of land".

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* Occupancy tenancy is what I have described as hereditary tenancy. In my Province, if a man is not by birth a statutory tenant, although he is occupying the amount of land for 30 years, or if he has occupied it in two generations



for 50 years, he will not be able to vote. An occupancy tenant is a very artificial definition.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: I should like to say a few words in regard to conditions in Madras. I do not think, speaking for myself, that there is any rivalry between the urban and the rural areas of the Madras Presidency. Our system is this, that each of the districts has got two members; in some districts they have three members, and in some districts they have four members, according to the size of the population and the number of voters, and generally the towns in those districts vote along with the rural voters and return the two or three or four members allotted to the district, except in the case of four towns in the Mofussil and the City of Madras, which has four representatives; so we have eight representatives for the whole Province, representing what we call the urban areas, four towns besides Madras City, which has got four representatives. As regards the other districts, as I said, the towns in those districts vote along with the rural voters, and therefore there is no difficulty whatever, so far as I can see, in Madras; there is no accentuation of difficulties arising from the urban or the rural vote, nor is there any rivalry or jealousy or separate interest which each of them represents. As regards the exact qualifications in municipal towns, it is the payment of about Rs. 3 a year in municipal taxation, which puts a man on the register. In rural areas we hold—

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav*: May I correct you; it is not municipal taxation; it is rent.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: I am talking of Madras, about which I know something. This is a statement which has been prepared in the Secretariat here, and this says, "The payment of Rs. 3 a year in municipal taxation" shall be the qualification required by a voter to come on to the register, in those towns which have separate representation, separately. But this has resulted in this. Some of the towns which return a single member have only voters of, say, about 3,000 or 4,000, whereas in the rural area the district, the unit is between 40,000 and 50,000 voters in the whole area. Of course, there is no unit of voters. I take it that in this country for every 50,000 or 60,000 voters you have a member; is that so?

*Chairman*: There is nothing laid down.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: No, but it works out that way; but our system has not been based upon it; it is a territorial unit, and in some of our districts there are 25,000 voters returning two members, in other districts there are 40,000 voters returning two members, and in some towns returning one single member, the voters are about 3,000 or 4,000—below 10,000. Some of the southern towns are more populous than the northern towns, therefore it varies. Thus the system in this question of urban versus rural has not made any headway in Madras, so I do not think, Sir, that so far as Madras is concerned (I think I am safe in



saying this), there is any need to differentiate the urban voter. A man living in the town has some property in the district; he has some land which empowers him to come on the register; he generally has a house. One or other of the qualifications brings him on the register.

*Mr. Foot:* But you told us that you do not consider that there should be any continuing disparity between the rural and the urban population.

*Divan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* I do not understand what you mean by disparity. The urban voter gets on to the register in consequence of his paying Rs. 3 municipal taxation. The rural voter generally holds a piece of land on which he pays a rent, the rental value being fixed. So I cannot understand the use of the word "disparity" between the one and the other. As regards the number of voters, as I have already said, the number of voters in the towns is much smaller than the number of voters in the district, which is our territorial area. The proportion is very much larger in the rural areas.

*Chairman:* What the Simon Commission said was this. In paragraph 106 of their Report they dealt with this question of the franchise and the setting up of the new Franchise Committee and they said this: "The Franchise Committee would be directed to consult the provincial Governments before determining what modifications in voting qualifications should be made for this purpose, and would be required, in drawing up its scheme, to have due regard to the respective claims of rural and urban areas."

*Mr. Foot:* Would you read from the Government of India Despatch, on the same point, at the top of the page, 24.

*Chairman:* The Government of India Despatch says, on page 24: "In more than one province the Committee may find that some readjustment is necessary of the present representation respectively of urban and rural areas and we attach great importance to securing genuine and effective representation of rural interests." That is probably quantum; but in that he is referring this to the Franchise Committee, he is dealing with the franchise.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I am not so sure, Sir, if you read it again. That also partly refers to representation.

*Chairman:* The paragraph in the Simon Commission Report is headed "Our own Proposals for Extension". This is plainly the franchise.

*Mr. Foot:* And the Government of India Report turned on the franchise.

*Chairman:* We obviously cannot do anything more than make a recommendation. Do you think that we might recommend that this Committee, the Franchise Committee, or the Expert Committee, or whatever you call it, should so adjust the franchise qualification as to remove, in those areas where it exists, any marked disparity between the proportion of urban voters to the



rural voters enfranchised? What I mean to say is, the disparity existing between the proportion of urban voters to the urban population, and the proportion of rural voters to the rural population, and where in any area you find there is a marked disparity between the two, then the Expert Franchise Committee should consider so adjusting the franchise as to remove that disparity.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* That is not exactly the point, I think, Sir, but my impression is—I speak subject to further examination—that in many urban areas it compares unfavourably with regard to population and area, and in other places vice versa. I only draw your attention to this: Would you put it in a wider form, or would you put it as an implication that in the rural areas it is less?

*Chairman:* We will put it in the wider form if you like; try to get the two proportions alike. Then on those lines, Sir Cowasji, would that suit you?

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* I do not think that is quite the point, if I may say so. The point is not whether the number of voters between the urban and rural areas are fairly divided, but whether the number of representatives on the Council are fairly divided.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* That is quantum.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* That is quantum, perhaps, but if you do not go into quantum, then I am afraid you will find that the franchise works very fairly as it is. It is the quantum that may be unfair, and if we cannot refer to that here and cannot criticise it or make suggestions, naturally we do not get to the root of the question; that is the trouble. Then another point is residential qualification, which is a very main issue. It is the main issue. Is it necessary to reside in a constituency to become its member? That is another very important point.

*Chairman:* That is a separate point. Let us discuss it separately if we may. Will not this suggestion meet you? We are only dealing with the question of franchise here. Mr. Zafrullah Khan has given us one illustration, as I followed it, of a case in which an urban tenancy or an urban letting produces two votes, whereas a somewhat similar affair in the rural area produces one. That is the sort of thing which the Franchise Committee ought to bear in mind in order to adjust, so far as it is possible, the disparity that exists, if it exists in any area, as between rural and urban or as between urban and rural. That is the point. Cannot we simply make a recommendation on those lines?

Now the next point concerns the residential point which Sir Cowasji mentioned.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* The point is that in some provinces the voter living in one constituency can be returned as a member for another constituency. In other provinces that is not allowed. In Bombay it is not allowed.

*Mr. S. B. Tambe:* Bombay, Central Provinces and the Punjab.



*Chairman:* I am following you, but you are going to tell me whether this is a question of franchise. The question as to whether you can have a carpet-bagger Member of Parliament, for instance, is obviously not a question of franchise. It is obviously outside the terms of reference of this Committee.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* Yes, Sir, I quite see that, but may I point out that it is very important when it comes to representing the people.

*Chairman:* We must have another Committee, Sir Cowasji.

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav:* In Bombay it is a rule that in the rural area a man may possess landed property even beyond the standard laid down to qualify for a vote, but if he does not reside in the constituency, he is not on the register. A residence qualification for a voter is required there.

*Chairman:* That is a perfectly good point here. The question of a qualification for a voter is quite all right; the question of a qualification for a representative is a different question altogether. We can have no discussion as to the residential qualification for a representative here, but we can have any discussion you like as to the residential qualification of a voter.

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav:* I propose, Sir, that that restriction should be done away with, and that the possession of property should entitle him to vote.

*Rao Bahadur Srinivasan:* Property or any qualification?

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav:* Yes, property or any qualification.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* Do I understand that the suggestion made by Mr. Jadhav is that a man who holds land, and under ordinary circumstances would get a vote, also owns property in a town and could also get a vote in that town—that he should be allowed to vote? Is that what you mean?

*Chairman:* No; as I understand Mr. Jadhav's point it is this. He says the other special point that ought to be corrected is this. Among other things, a man who would otherwise have a vote loses it by reason of being an absentee, and he wants us to direct the Franchise Committee that a man ought not to lose a vote which he otherwise would have merely because he does not happen to reside in the place where that vote would be.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* But he has a vote somewhere else.

*Chairman:* Whether he has a vote somewhere else or not is not this point at all, as I understand it. Your point does not depend on that, does it, Mr. Jadhav?

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav:* No, not at all.

*Chairman:* It is simply the question of the absentee vote, as we call it here.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* Does he exercise his option as to where he should vote?



*Chairman*: He can vote in either of the two places.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: That is as it is in India now.

*Chairman*: No, I think not. In Bombay you cannot have an out-voter, and a man cannot be put on the register unless he lives in the constituency. It must be a residential qualification. The proposal is that we should direct the expert Franchise Committee that that requirement ought to be done away with. Has anybody got any view to the contrary?—That seems to be carried unanimously.

Now there is the question of disqualifications, which somebody wanted to raise.

*Mr. Basu*: As regards the question of disqualification, one of the questions of disqualification under the law and practice as they prevail now, is that persons who have been convicted by a criminal court and have undergone imprisonment for a period of six months or over should be disqualified from being on the voters' list or from being elected as a representative.

*Chairman*: For five years. The disqualification lasts five years.

*Mr. Basu*: Yes. Having regard to the fact that during the last few years the number of persons in gaol for offences which may ordinarily be classed as political offences, and a great many of whom, both men and women, are persons who are almost necessary in their respective localities for social service and general public work, there should be a recommendation that persons who have not been convicted of any offence indicating moral turpitude should not be disqualified from either being placed on the register or being elected to the legislature. Otherwise we debar a very large number of social workers from associating in the work of the legislature, and it will be a great handicap in a province to start work without them.

*Mr. Joshi*: What is the proposal?

*Mr. Basu*: The proposal is that the disqualification in the general terms in which it stands now should be done away with, and that only offences which indicate moral turpitude should be a disqualification.

*Lord Zetland*: Might I ask—I am not quite clear—who will decide whether the offence involves moral turpitude or not?

*Mr. Basu*: In the Indian Penal Code the offences are so clearly defined that a list could be made by the Expert Franchise Committee indicating which particular offences should be regarded as carrying disqualification.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: Let us suppose a patriot goes to a village and purchases a piece of cloth in face of a political boycott. He is technically guilty of the same offence as another man who goes there to commit a burglary. The matter is not as simple as Mr. Basu thinks. I am quite willing to adopt the phrase he has used, "Moral turpitude", but I have not clearly before me the several sub-sections of the rule relating to such offences. If a



man committed some offence with a particular object, I might even go further, but I am not able to go to the extent of saying that a man who commits murder, whatever his object may have been, should not be disqualified. A man who commits a technical offence in furtherance of a political movement certainly stands on a different footing from a moral criminal.

*Mr. Joshi:* If Mr. Basu will propose that all people who have been convicted and have undergone imprisonment for a certain period should not be disqualified, I am willing to support him. A man may have done something wrong, but he has paid the penalty, and he should not be penalised again. If we bring in the phrase "moral turpitude", we are landing ourselves in great difficulty. This principle of moral turpitude will not do, but if we accept the principle that a man who paid the penalty for his offence, whatever it is, should not be penalised again, I am in full agreement.

*Chairman:* "Moral turpitude", I agree, is very difficult to define. At present the rule is this, that if a man is sent to prison for a term exceeding six months he loses his right to vote for five years, yet there is a dispensing power, and the local government can consider each case on its merits and decide whether or not that rule shall be enforced.

*Mr. Jadhav:* I know that the rule has been relaxed in many cases, and the people to whom it would apply have been allowed to stand for election.

*Chairman:* I have before me the Electoral Rules, and they state that if any person is convicted of an offence under Chapter IX (A) of the Indian Penal Code punishable with imprisonment for a term exceeding six months, or is, after enquiry by the Commissioners for the time being, reported as guilty of a corrupt practice as specified in certain schedules, his name, if on the Electoral Roll, shall be removed therefrom, and shall not be registered therein for a period of five years from the date of the conviction or of the report as the case may be: or, if not on the Electoral Roll, shall not be so registered for a like period. But it is added, "provided that the local government may direct that the name of any person to whom this sub-Rule applies shall be registered on the Electoral Roll". That is the existing provision.

*Mr. Tambe:* That relates to the election. There is another rule. Chapter IX (A) is a new Chapter which has been added.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* This dispensing power on the part of the local government is at work every day.

*Chairman:* It seems to be extraordinarily difficult to lay down any general rule. It must be a matter of discretion in each case.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao:* To give discretion to local Governments, and to direct persons who have been convicted to apply to them, really places the Government in a very awkward position. I would like to have a rule which would operate without any discretion being exercised by the local Governments.



*Sir C. Setalvad*: You would have no disqualification though the man may have committed any offence?

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: I do not say that. But in certain offences a man is disqualified automatically.

*Mr. Chintamani*: I strongly support the plea against the vesting of discretion in this matter in the local Governments. The last speaker has put it with characteristic moderation. It is beyond question that occasionally such discretion is apt to be exercised, owing to one circumstance or another, in a manner prejudicial to the individual concerned. I may be a little more positive and state with confidence based upon knowledge of events in the part of the country from which I come that the vesting of this discretion in local Governments has led to the misuse of such discretion. It may have been done with the best intentions, but it has unquestionably created the impression that men of a certain political persuasion can easily get their disqualification removed, whereas others whose activities may be embarrassing to the Government for the time being cannot do so. If we were sitting as a private body I could state concrete cases and furnish the justification for this popular impression. I agree with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad that you cannot say there should be no disqualification whatever, but it should not be at the discretion of the local Governments, it should be something more precisely definable and not at the mercy of any Executive. You, Sir, have expressed a difficulty with regard to the phrase "moral turpitude". I am not going to put my opinion against yours, but I would humbly suggest this: in the criminal law offences are divided into various categories, against the person, against property, against public security, against the State, and so on. It can be seen that various categories of these offences do definitely involve moral turpitude. It is chiefly when we are dealing with offences against the State that the difficulty arises. There one test has been suggested, and in some cases applied, in recent political agitations in my country. It has been considered whether a man's offence against the State has involved some physical violence or has been limited merely to speech. If the former a graver view is taken. If a man did not more than make a speech which was held by our judicial tribunals to be seditious and nothing more, his case stands on a different footing in respect to moral turpitude than that of the man who has committed violence against persons or property. It is for the Franchise Committee to go a little more into detail and make a recommendation which would remove the matter from the discretion of the local Governments and define the categories where disqualifications should remain and where they should be removed. It will suffice for my purposes if this Committee will recommend that the subject be considered in greater detail by the Expert Franchise Committee with a view to the avoidance of unnecessary hardship, and at the same time to the avoidance of the use of discretionary power by the local Governments.



*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney*: May I ask whether in the British Parliament there is any rule disqualifying a subject from being on the electoral rolls or from sitting in Parliament if he has been imprisoned?

*Chairman*: The only disqualification relates, I believe, to lunatics and Peers.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney*: I would suggest for the consideration of this Committee, that it is not right for a man to be punished twice for the same offence. If he has been adequately punished by law, why should he, while continuing to enjoy other rights of citizenship and social rights, be debarred from voting in an election or from taking his seat on the Council?

*Sir Phiroze Sethna*: I would suggest that the period which under the present rules is five years, should be reduced to three years.

*Mr. Tambe*: I think you will find that a voter is not disqualified on account of a conviction; the law is that a person who has been convicted cannot stand as a candidate, though he may be a voter.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: I agree with Colonel Gidney that, after all, the franchise law is not a law for the reformation of criminals. Moreover, if the disqualification is to disappear after a certain time, I do not see why it should exist at all. One does not expect that people after they have come out of gaol will be deterred from further crime by the fact that they cannot get on the electoral register for five years. On the other hand, there may be some logic in saying that a conviction in respect to an offence in an election shall carry with it the added penalty that such a person shall be disqualified for a certain period. In other offences my submission is that they should not be regarded as involving disqualification, not even the offence of murder. If a man is guilty of murder let him be hanged. The magistrate will never be influenced in the way of lighter punishment because he thinks that the poor man is going to suffer a political penalty. And again, as has been pointed out, when a man comes out of prison he does not lose any of his other privileges.

*Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain*: The difficulty arises in the qualification being the same for an elector as for the candidate.

*Mr. Jadhav*: A man is not deprived of his vote after he has been convicted, but he is not allowed to stand as a candidate for the Legislative Council for a period of five years. I do not think, Sir, that that rule should stand.

*Chairman*: That does not concern us.

I have now in my hands a copy of the Penal Code. Chapter IX (A) relates only to offences in regard to elections. That rather meets Mr. Zafrullah Khan's point. There is some logic in saying that if a man commit some offence relating to an election, he shall for a time lose his vote. That is the only rule, so far as I can



see. Otherwise I do not think there is much substance in the point.

The other disqualification does not concern us in this sub-Committee, and now we know that this merely relates to electoral offences it seems to me there is very little substance in this discussion, and I think we might pass from it.

*Mr. Tambe:* There is one small disqualification I should like to mention. A subject of an Indian State living in British India cannot vote at present.

*Chairman:* I do not think we can deal with that. Now we come to question 4. The future electorate: "Should provision for future extensions of the franchise be made now or should Provincial Legislatures be given complete, or limited, power to alter their franchise at any time or after a given number of years?"

*Mr. Shiva Rao:* I think Provincial Legislatures should not be vested with that power, because if that power is given to them I do not think they will be anxious to expand the electorate at all. On the other hand, I think a definite direction should be given to the Franchise Committee that the franchise should be so framed as to be capable of automatic expansion, so that at the end of a certain period—say ten years—we shall have universal adult suffrage. I think that definite direction should be given to the Franchise Committee.

*Mr. Basu:* I think our experience has been different. Soon after the inauguration of the Montagu Reforms, some of Provincial Legislatures—nearly all of them, I believe—extended the franchise by including women on the electoral roll. They did not misuse their power or leave it unused. Therefore, so far as the Provincial Legislatures are concerned, I think power should be given to them to expand or modify the franchise in any way they deem expedient in the light of their experience.

As regards the Central Legislature, they should be given power to modify or alter their own electorate.

*Mr. Joshi:* With regard to the point raised by Mr. Basu, I do not think he has given sufficient facts to prove that the Legislatures are really anxious to part with the power from the class which at present has it to the class which has not got it. He said the Legislatures have given votes to women, and it is true that they have done so, but to women belonging to their own class. He does not see the difference. I will give him my experience. In Bombay we have a Municipal Corporation and a Provincial Council. When the last Council was constituted certain qualifications were laid down for voters in Bombay City, such as a man who pays in rent Rs. 10 per month for occupying rooms. While such a man was qualified to vote for the Provincial Legislature, he could not vote in the elections for the Bombay Municipal Corporation. The question was raised in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and my friends—some of whom are here—opposed a change, and we could not get the Bombay Municipal Corporation



to pass a resolution in favour of reducing the qualification and bringing it to the level of the qualification necessary for the Provincial Legislative Council elections. Our experience in connection with the Bombay Municipal Council, therefore, clearly shows that an economic class which holds the power in its hands will not easily part with the power in favour of another economic class.

It is therefore much better that an automatic expansion should be provided for, and, after all, there are very few here who have stated that ultimately power should not be transferred to the people generally. Everybody pays lip homage to the ideal of universal adult suffrage. If that is so, let us provide for the establishment of that principle. The difficulties are said to be difficulties regarding machinery, but if the difficulties in universal adult suffrage are due to machinery you can adjust your machinery in a fixed period to the needs of the automatic extension of the franchise. I therefore think this sub-Committee should give a definite direction that the franchise shall be extended automatically.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: What is to provide for this?

*Mr. Joshi*: It must be provided in the Statute.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: The Statute must lay down here and now a scheme of automatic extension?

*Mr. Joshi*: Yes.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: Until adult suffrage is reached?

*Mr. Joshi*: Yes. The number of voters, it can be provided, shall be doubled, trebled, or quadrupled.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: The Parliamentary Statute would lay down the automatic expansion?

*Mr. Joshi*: A Parliamentary or any other Statute.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: I have no apprehension that if Provincial Legislative Councils are vested with the power of extending the franchise they will be chary of exercising it. On the other hand, I consider the advantage in adopting that method for the extension of the franchise is that if we, or even the expert Franchise Committee, proceed to lay down certain stages for the automatic expansion of the franchise, we or they should be doing so without the light of the experience that will be gained by the working of the immediate extension which we now contemplate. We should have to lay down, if we did it now, that the franchise must be extended along certain lines; but if the Provincial Council are to exercise that power, the difference will be that they will be able to do so in the light of experience gained of the very large immediate extension that all of us contemplate as being bound to take place.

Once that has taken place, I think our experience shows that the Provincial Councils will not hesitate to extend the franchise as far as they think practicable having regard to the conditions prevailing in each Province. That will give each Provincial



Council an opportunity to consider the circumstances of their own particular Province, and, though the advance in some Provinces may not be so rapid as in others, and though in some of them it may not be along the same lines as in others, if power is left to the Councils the advance will be suited to the conditions of each Province. We have laid down universal adult franchise as the ideal, and so directions can be given that if at any time one Province is lagging too far behind in putting into effect the principles laid down, power may be given to the Central Government or to some other authority after a certain number of years to see that the percentage of voters is brought up to a certain figure. I think, however, that even that power is not necessary, for I am perfectly confident the Provincial Councils, will be perfectly ready to extend the franchise, and it is just for that reason, because I differ from Mr. Shiva Rao's estimate of the willingness of Provincial Councils to extend the franchise, that I say power should be given to the Provincial Councils, so that in some Provinces an immediate advance may be made, far in excess of what is practicable in other Provinces; such Provinces should not be tied down by any automatic stages which may be fixed now.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney:* This sub-Committee has before it the recommendations of the Simon Commission, which advocated a periodic examination of the situation; if I remember rightly, they recommend examination after ten years and another examination after 15 years. If we refer to the Government of India Despatch on this matter, we find that the Government of India, while accepting this point in principle, issues a note of warning. Mr. Joshi talks of an automatic expansion, but who is to operate that automatic expansion but the Legislature? I submit the Provincial Legislatures should be given sole authority to extend the franchise when and how they think necessary and in the light of the experience gained. I do not think we can ask the Franchise Commission to provide for an extension of the franchise after stated periods; I think that should be left entirely to the will and control of the Provincial Legislatures.

*Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan:* I agree with Colonel Gidney that it is not possible to lay down here and now any provision embodying the principle of an automatic increase. I think the Provincial Legislatures must have some power to extend the franchise, but I am not prepared to vest the Provincial Legislatures with complete powers in the matter. In the first place, I think there is a possibility that the ratio of the various communities in a Legislature may be disturbed. In the second place, we have had experience of the complete power given to the States of America, which have been working for about a century and a quarter, and they have abused that power in a number of cases; they have disqualified certain communities, such as the Chinese and others, and they have manipulated constituencies. A danger is involved, therefore, in giving complete power to the Legislature, but I am quite prepared to give limited powers to the Legislature



and leave some central authority power to supervise the application of that power if the Provincial Legislatures go wrong.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I think—possibly with the exception of one or two of my friends opposite—we are all agreed that the Provincial Legislatures should be given the right to reconsider the question of the franchise at a future date. One important point, however, is when? Should there be a period for experience, say of five or ten years, before which no Legislature may consider this question? That is one point which we must decide. I think, Sir, it would not be right to allow a Legislature to consider this important question of the franchise within its first or second sessions, as otherwise the Legislature may be constantly discussing this question, and there will be a feeling of uncertainty throughout the first critical period of working these Reforms. Secondly, Mr. Joshi has pointed out that he has no confidence in the Legislatures with regard to the question of extending the franchise. He says they will not be prepared to part with their powers, as he calls them. I do not agree with him. I am rather apprehensive the other way, that if the Legislature has this power it may rush into a broadening of the franchise a little faster and a little sooner than may be advisable. It is perfectly true the Bombay Municipal Corporation refused to accept the widening of the franchise, but a widening of the franchise did take place. It is this widening of the municipality franchise in the City of Bombay, and the results of that widening, which has made me and a large number of the people in Bombay apprehensive of the results that may accrue from a broadening and widening of the franchise, and therefore, although I do not desire to bring before a sub-Committee of this sort what is after all an unimportant matter, I will satisfy myself by saying that it is those very results which have made us apprehensive. It is the very lessons we have learned by the instance Mr. Joshi has quoted that make us desire to go a little slowly. I have no hesitation in saying that the Bombay Legislative Council, elected on this broader franchise, will not hesitate to broaden the franchise further if it is really in the interests of the Province; and, if it is not in the interests of the Province, I trust the Bombay Legislative Council will have the strength—and I may say the good sense—to refuse to do it. Therefore, Sir, I have no hesitation in suggesting that it be left to the Council, but with a period of five years or ten years before anything can be done. I prefer ten years, but I do not want to be dogmatic, and if the majority of the sub-Committee prefer five years I will accept that.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: I do not think it would be desirable to lay down that any automatic extension of the franchise must take place after a stated period. As a matter of fact, as has already been pointed out, we should extend the franchise in the light of the experience that will be gained by the present extension. When we find that the present extension may be as large as 60 or 70 per cent. of the adult male population, we can see



that it is a big extension, and we do not know what the experience here of the various Provinces may be so far as the present extension is concerned. At the same time, I do feel that if complete powers are given to the Legislature to resort to extension at any time they like they may rush through an extension too soon, and for that reason I agree with Sir Cowasji Jehangir that minimum period ought to be fixed before which no revision of the franchise qualifications decided on by the expert Franchise Committee can take place. At the same time I agree with what my friend Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan has suggested, namely that this decision of the Provincial Legislature should be controlled by the Central Legislature or Federal Legislature or whatever it may be, so that the Provincial Legislature, with the approval of the Federal Legislature, may be able to extend the Franchise qualification to the extent that may be desirable in the various Provinces.

*Chairman:* Let me put to the meeting what Sir Cowasji Jehangir has suggested, as I understand it. I understand his suggestion to be that the matter shall be left to the various Provincial Legislatures, which shall have power to decide for themselves what extension of the franchise shall be made, but that there ought to be some limited period of time before such matters can be considered. I feel he is right there, if only for the reason that unless you have some limited period of time like that it is not much good setting up an expert Franchise Committee at all; they will say "What are we wasting our time for?"

The suggestion has been made that the period of time should be ten years, and, after all, we are embarking on a very substantial alteration of the franchise now, and ten years is a period of time which goes very soon. If we were to say that after ten years the matter should be left to the Provincial Legislatures to do what they thought proper, would that be the sense of this meeting?

*Mr. Jadhav:* I think ten years is too long; let us say seven years.

*Mr. Basu:* If you say five years it means six, because the life of a Legislature is three years. If you make it five years, then, it will automatically be ten years, for there will have to be two elections on the franchise which is first laid down.

*Chairman:* You want two elections; that is the idea?

*A Member:* It should be not less than ten years.

*Major Stanley:* After ten years it is quite possible that some Provinces will decide to go a long way at once, while others may not move at all, and the consequence is that in time you may get a tremendous disparity between the voting strengths in the different Provinces. I do not know whether we ought to give somebody the power to institute an enquiry, say after 15 years, into the respective qualifications in the various Provinces, with a view to removing disparities.



*Lieut.-Col. Gidney*: If during that ten years a community finds it is suffering from a serious drawback or disadvantage, must it go on for ten years before it can change things? I do not think that is right.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: You cannot gain experience with less than two elections.

*Mr. Jadhav*: Would any Legislative Council have the power to go back after ten years and restrict the franchise? Some of them might wish to do that.

*Chairman*: Their powers would be powers of extension, not of diminution.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: I should like to say a word on this subject, without prejudice to the position we have taken all along. It seems to me that as compared with the alternatives which have been suggested, one by Mr. Joshi that there should be some law providing for automatic extension, and the other, the main proposal, that the matter should be left to the sweet will of the Legislatures, the recommendations made by the Simon Commission seem to me to be better and to be more readily acceptable from my point of view. It might be much better, as I say, to have some authority which will investigate at the end of a definite period exactly what has been the result of the working of the franchise up to that period. That body will be able to see what disparity there has been as between the different provinces. That body will be able to see what is the machinery existing at the end of the ten years, in order to cope with the elections if the franchise were to be altered, and that body, being impartial itself, will be able to deal with the rights of the mass of the people much more readily, in a much more just and equitable way, than the class-conscious people who may be installed as the result of the limited franchise which we are introducing to-day. For these reasons it seems to me that the proposals of the Simon Commission are better than the alternatives.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Who is to set that up?

*Dr. Ambedkar*: Just as Parliament in the Act suggested that there should be a Public Services Commission, so it could be suggested that there should be the appointment of a Committee.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: By the Central Government.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: Yes.

*Chairman*: I think I know enough now to draft a Report on this subject, but I should like to know what is your view—not that we shall here and now recommend that any Expert Franchise Committee or any other Committee should be set up after 15 years, say, but in view of the possibility that one Province might extend its franchise much more generously than another, so that the whole thing might get out of step, ought we to contemplate the possibility of any body being constituted to look into the matter then, to try and adjust things, or shall we merely content ourselves with leaving things to the Provinces, or ought we to follow Dr. Ambed-



kar's idea of a Committee? We need not say that it has to come into being, or when it is to come into being, but that it might function if it came into being.

*Mr. Basu* : At any period when the Central Government desired to appoint a Committee.

*Chairman* : We will not say how it is to be appointed, but what do you say about the possibility of appointing such a body?

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao* : I think the Government of India should set up such a body, not that Parliament should set up such a body.

*Dr. Ambedkar* : What difference does it make?

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao* : We are leaving great freedom in all these matters. I would like to eliminate parliamentary control. I should like to know what the proposal is. If you say that after a number of years it shall be competent for the Government of India to appoint a committee to look into this question in the whole of the Provinces, I shall have no objection, but if it is a question of Parliament going into this question again in ten years, I object to it entirely. I have no objection to the Committee being appointed by which the franchise will be extended, but I should like that power vested entirely in the Government of India and to be exercised at its discretion whenever there is necessity for such a thing within a certain number of years, or after a certain number of years.

*Dr. Ambedkar* : How has it any bearing on the functions of this sub-Committee whether this Committee is appointed by Parliament or by the Government of India?

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao* : We are devolving authority to India from Parliament, because in 1919 when this question came up before the Parliamentary Committee, I and several others with me contended that there should be devolution of questions like this to authorities in India; and because such a step was not taken, we are now confronted with the accumulated complaints about franchise which are now being investigated, and they could not be investigated then because parliamentary permission was required. Therefore I suggest that any step taken in that direction should be devolution of complete power to the Government of India, to be exercised at its discretion to go into the whole question of franchise in a certain number of years. That is a point upon which I really desire to lay some stress.

*Lord Zetland* : My own view would have been that this is a matter which should properly be left to the Provinces. I understood that most of my friends here came over from India with the intention of asking for complete responsible self-government in the Provinces, Provincial autonomy—in other words, self-determination. Each Province was to be at liberty to work out its own salvation, and personally, therefore, I should be content to accept the formula put forward by the Chairman; that after a period of



ten years it should be open to each Provincial Legislature to take what step it considered desirable in the matter of the extension of the franchise in its own Province. If that is done I do not myself expect that you will find one Province lagging very far behind another. It is possible that you may get a certain amount of difference in the different Provinces, but that will probably be due to local circumstances, and therefore will be desirable; but if it is the general feeling of the Committee that you ought to have some outside authority which should have the power of stepping in at any time and pointing out to any particular Province or to Provinces that they are lagging very far behind the others, if you want an authority of that kind, then it seems to me that it might possibly be done in this way. If a federal court is set up under a federal system, you might give the federal government the right, from time to time, to submit the matter to the federal court for their consideration. That is, of course, making a lot of assumptions. We do not know whether we are going to have a federal court in India, or how it is going to be constituted, but it does seem to me that that is a sort of way in which you might bring in what might be described as a neutral outside authority, should it at any time be thought desirable to bring in an outside authority to advise one or other of the Provinces to go a little faster.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* I can well understand that the federal government should be charged with the duty of setting up a Committee for extending the franchise, but I do not quite follow what is meant by representing the matter to the federal court. How is that to be a matter which will be submitted to the court for decision? The federal government can be charged with the duty of setting up a body which should go into the question of the extension of franchise after a particular period, when a certain Province has not acted in a way in which it ought to have acted, but I do not quite understand how the federal government could submit the matter to the federal court to get a decision on this matter.

*Lord Zetland:* I brought in the federal court as it seemed to me to be a neutral body, but I admit that I have not thought the question out. Surely it is a legislative matter. The franchise is extended by legislation.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* The setting up of a Commission is a political matter dealing with political rights.

*Lord Zetland:* It is done by legislation. After all, in this country we have no outside authority to tell us from time to time whether we ought to extend our franchise or not. The franchise has been extended in this country by Parliament, and I cannot myself see, therefore, why the same process should not work perfectly well in the Provinces of India.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* In that case, then, I can understand this, that if a particular legislature does not act properly, then the Central Legislature or the federal legislature should have the power to go into the matter and extend the franchise in a particular Pro-



vince and act for them. That I can well understand. Or the Central Government may set up a Commission to go into the question of the franchise for a particular Province and then see whether adult franchise or an extension of the franchise is not desirable; but certainly I do not quite follow how the matter should go to the federal court. Either the Central Government should act or the Central Legislature should act.

*Chairman:* My impression, I am bound to say, is this. I think it is very difficult to work the thing really with the federal government intervening. If you have a federation—we none of us know whether you will, but if you do have a federation—it is very difficult. I think, for the federal government to intervene in such a matter. There would be a good deal of jealousy between the federal government and the Provincial governments. There always is; one always says that the other is over-stepping the limit, and so on. It would make for a good deal of bad working if the federal government had the right to legislate for a Province and to say who were to be the voters for the Provincial elections of a Province. I think you are stirring up trouble for yourselves. But I do not mind; and I will gladly give way to the feeling of the Committee, but that would be my impression from what I know about federal legislations—that you are asking for trouble if you do that.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* May I say one word. There is only one point on which I have a little hesitation, and that point has been alluded to by Dr. Shafa'at. If I may say so, I have no great apprehension of one Province going far ahead of another. If it does, probably, as Lord Zetland said, it will be most suitable for the Province. Therefore you will have differences between the Provinces. You cannot help it. In a country like India it is impossible to have uniformity, but a legislature may go wrong in adjusting its franchise with regard to the rights and interests of minorities, and there I could understand there being some apprehension. It is not a new question, Sir; it is a question that has already been brought up before; I am not referring to anything new, and all my friends opposite are fully alive to this question although it has not been brought up immediately just now to-day. A legislature may adjust its franchise so that a minority may be deprived of its voting strength. It may happen; and therefore I could quite understand there being some apprehension on that point, and therefore if anybody suggested a right of appeal by a minority, I could understand it. Beyond that, I think the legislatures may be trusted to do the best thing in their own interests.

*Sir Chimanalal Setalvad:* That would be a question for the Minorities Committee.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* There is nothing new in that. These points have been considered on many occasions.

*Chairman:* Very well, I think we had better leave it to the Provinces. Then I will make a report on those lines.



Now we come to the last question: "Should the franchise of any directly elected federal or central legislature be the same as that for the provincial legislature, or if not in what way should the provincial franchise be modified"? I would point out, if I may, that this assumes there is to be a directly elected central or federal legislature. Of course, that is a big assumption, but we make that assumption for the purpose of answering this question; we do not go into it. Now, on that assumption, is your franchise to be the same as for the provincial legislature, or if not, in what way should the provincial franchise be modified?

*Mr. Basu:* There is another difficulty, and that is whether the provincial legislatures or the central legislature are to be bicameral or not, and whether the franchise for the two chambers should be the same or different. At present in India the two things are the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The Council of State franchise is different; it is actually higher than the franchise for the Legislative Assembly, and the franchise for the Provincial legislatures is further lowered. My suggestion is that so far as the Lower House of the Central Legislature is concerned, and so far as the Provincial legislatures are concerned, the franchise should be the same. As regards the constitution of the Second Chamber in the Centre, that is a complicated question, and unless we have some information from the Federal Structure Committee as to what is to be the kind of second Chamber that they are likely to recommend, it is impossible for us to make any recommendation.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* Generally speaking, I am in favour of direct election, but I consider that it is physically impossible unless we are prepared to have 2,000 or 1,500 or 2,500 members in our Central Legislature, to have direct election, and to have a real direct election where the candidates and the voters will be in touch with each other. Therefore, in view of the practical difficulty we must have some kind of indirect election, and as that is not the immediate question I would continue by saying that I hope that any one who recommends direct election would also kindly indicate the franchise, the number of seats, the number of constituencies and other relevant important points.

*Mr. Jadhav:* Direct election is an important question, there is no doubt. If direct election to the Legislative Assembly is laid down, then what should the qualifications of a voter be? At present there is a different qualification for the vote for a member of the Legislative Council and the qualification as a voter to the Legislative Assembly, and the consequences are also very different. At present in the Bombay Deccan, seven districts form one constituency. No, if the same qualification be prescribed for a voter of the Legislative Assembly as for a voter of the Legislative Council, then the number of voters for the Legislative Assembly will be enormously large, and the member will find it very difficult to canvass such a very big constituency. For that purpose it will be necessary to increase the number of members of the Legislative



Assembly. At present the number of the Legislative Assembly is very small, and the Simon Commission recommends that there should be, on the whole, or generally, a member for a million of population. If that be accepted, and the number of seats is increased under that proposal, then I think there would not be much difficulty in having the same qualification as the qualification for a voter to the Legislative Council; but if the number of the Legislative Assembly is to be much smaller, and therefore each constituency is to be bigger, then of course there ought to be a difference in qualifications.

*Sir Hubert Carr:* It seems to me that we ought to be ready to make a very pronounced difference between the qualifications for voters in an electorate to the Provincial legislature, and to the Central one. We have heard a great deal in the last day or two about the rights of the voters, and it has been said that voters should be given a chance to show their worth. Now, when it comes to the Central Legislature, I feel rather inclined to the other point of view which has been advanced. One view was that it requires a responsible electorate in order to have a responsible government, and another was that we cannot use the electorate merely as educational; it is too expensive. I personally feel that very strongly when we get to the Central Legislature. The franchise is extremely useful to the under dog if he knows how to use it, but if he does not, I do not see that using democratic principles is really going to help him in the way he hopes.

Democracy is much more likely to turn into an ochlocracy—the rule of the rabble—if we extend it too far, and make the qualifications too low. I am glad to see the franchise increased in the provinces. I want to see it increased in the rural areas. But when it comes to electing a Central Legislature on which we hope to place great responsibility for the security and prosperity of these millions in India, I think it is looking at the matter from the wrong standpoint if we simply consider the rights and likes of the voter. The question is as to the emergence of his duties and his responsibility, and until he has proved himself fit to exercise a really intelligent vote I hope he will not be allowed to vote in the Centre, in other words, that the qualification will be kept up to a level which will make it an honour for any man to be on the Central Electorate.

*Lord Zetland:* Personally I do not think that direct voting for a Central Legislature is possible in a country of the size of India, but as we are discussing it on the basis that there is to be a directly elected Legislature, it is obvious that the qualification would have to be a very restricted one. India is the size of the whole of Europe, leaving out Russia. Let us suppose that at some future time Europe had to set up some Central Parliament, say in Rome, or Paris, or Berlin, would it be regarded as a practical proposition that the couple of hundred members of that Central Parliament should be directly elected by adult suffrage by the whole of the people of the different countries of Europe. Consider for a moment



the size of the existing constituencies which return members to the present Legislative Assembly. Take the rural constituencies, of which there are, I think, 73. Those constituencies vary in area from 6,000 square miles to 62,000 square miles, in some cases with a population running into 6 millions. In this country the average size of an English country is about 1,000 square miles. The county which I know best—Yorkshire—is the largest, with, I think, an area of about 6,000 square miles, that is to say, it is exactly the same size as the smallest of the rural constituencies in India for the present Legislative Assembly. How many members does Yorkshire send to the House of Commons? I will not complicate the matter by bringing in the number of members of boroughs, of which there are a large number in Yorkshire, but the county, I believe, sends 26 rural members to Parliament. Compare with that the smallest of the constituencies in India returning members to the Legislative Assembly, and sending one member only as compared with the 26 rural members sent by Yorkshire. That gives you a good idea of the absurdity of suggesting that this can be regarded in any real meaning of the word as representative government. It is quite obvious that when we get to these much larger constituencies, such as a constituency running into over 60,000 square miles, a constituency larger than the whole of the British Isles, with a population scattered all over the countryside in small villages, which as often as not have not got a metalled road, and are in most cases not within reasonable reach of a railway, the problem assumes most formidable dimensions. When we consider all these factors, including the further fact that only a few people in each village can take advantage of the written word, surely we must realise that to give a wide extension to a direct franchise for returning members to the Central Legislature really becomes a practical impossibility. Therefore I say that, although I do not for a moment believe that direct election is possible for returning members to a Central or Federal Legislature in India, if we are to discuss this question on the assumption that there is to be a direct electorate, we must make the qualification as restricted as possible, in order that the unfortunate member who represents this vast area may get into touch with his constituents.

*Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain*: The Federal Legislature will be composed of two Houses, although we are not certain as to its constitution. I have no doubt, with all due respect to Lord Zetland, that if you want to have authority in the Centre—as has been argued so often here and in India—you must have direct representation in the Central Legislature. Unless and until the representatives are in direct touch with the electorate, that electorate will not feel the responsibility which arises only out of such direct touch. In the Second House no doubt there might be indirect election, but if real authority is desired, direct election in the case of the First House is necessary. I have no doubt that the qualification in the case of the Central Legislature should be higher than in the case of the Provincial Legislature. The analogy between



England and India which Lord Zetland has drawn is not quite complete nor entirely apt. In this country there are many diverse interests which have to be represented in Parliament, and unless the constituencies are small, it is impossible for these interests to be represented adequately. But in India the rural interests are the same, and whether a constituency is of 100 square miles or 1,000 square miles, does not matter. The interests and questions arising in these constituencies are very similar.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* It is possible that a scheme might be accepted—I do not say it is to be supported—whereby a proportion of the representatives might be elected by the Provincial Legislative Councils—that is to say, indirectly—and only a proportion directly. That would have the effect of further reducing the number of directly elected representatives and in that case those considerations which Lord Zetland has put forward will be further emphasised. We must necessarily, by the sheer force of logic and of facts, restrict the franchise qualification for the Central Legislature to such an extent that the elections shall be easily practicable and the machinery of elections shall at no time break down. There is one further small factor. As we are contemplating universal adult franchise for the Provinces, and make no distinction for the Central Legislature, at some point of time we shall arrive at universal adult franchise for the Central Legislature. This will mean an enormous mass of many millions of voters. Consider the task of counting, on a modest estimate 150 million ballot papers, supposing that the elections for the Central and for the Provincial Legislatures take place at the same time. That will show you how impossible it would be to carry out the double election on the basis of adult franchise. There is no escape from the fact that if there is to be direct election some fairly high qualification will have to be devised.

*Mr. Joshi:* I am not speaking with very much hope of convincing this body, but I think it is my duty, as representing certain interests, to state what I feel on this matter. I feel that there should be no difficulty in India in introducing adult suffrage for the election of the Central Legislature. In the first place, we could increase the membership of the Legislature to about 600. There are in India 275 districts, and the average area of a district is about 3,000 square miles, or half the area of Yorkshire. Therefore it cannot be said that our constituency will be so large that nothing of the kind exists in England. If we have 550 members in the Central Legislature, we shall have an area of constituency for every two members of 3,000 square miles. There is no physical impossibility about forming such constituencies in India.

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad:* The member is forgetting that Yorkshire has, not one or two, but 26 members.

*Mr. Joshi:* We shall have two members for each district. But even for provincial legislatures we have got one member for a district, and if we are running elections with one member for one dis-



trict we could certainly run elections still more easily with two members for each district. I think, therefore, that there is no really great difficulty, as made out by some people here, in the introduction of adult franchise. On the matter of principle, however, I am not against the introduction of indirect election with adult franchise. I do not wish to propound a scheme for indirect election, but some system of electoral colleges might be set up. We can certainly devise a system whereby elections can be made ten times easier than they are to-day. We have got to-day, even for the Provincial Legislature, one member for each district, and with a House of 550 members in the Central Legislature, there would be two members for each district.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: Does Mr. Joshi mean that the Central Legislature should have 550 members?

*Mr. Joshi*: Yes.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: And that each district in the whole of India should return two members?

*Mr. Joshi*: Yes—275 districts.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: What about the Indian States?

*Mr. Joshi*: They would have one-third more. I think it is quite possible. In Europe there are Legislatures with large memberships of 600 or 800 which are functioning, and apparently functioning efficiently.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: I do not desire to discuss the merits of direct or indirect elections. Much can be said for both sides, and probably a compromise might be arrived at as in other Federations, where the Upper House is elected by indirect election and the Lower House by direct election. But there is one difficulty with regard to the size of the constituencies in a country as large as India. It is quite true that if the number of members in the Central Legislature is increased say to 300, if not to 500, the size of the constituencies will be one-third of what it is at present. There are now 90 territorial constituencies throughout India. But on account of communal representation one member has to cover a larger area than would have been the case were it not for such communal representation. For that reason the size of the constituency is very much enlarged. In that case unless there is some difference—and I should say a great difference—in the qualification for the Provincial Council and the qualification for the Central Legislature, the task of the candidate would become almost impossible in direct election.

What I would suggest is this. You have laid it down in the case of the Provincial Legislatures that the franchise qualification shall be so widened as to cover 10 per cent. of the population; that is to say, the existing voting strength in the Provinces will be trebled. I suggest that in the case of the Central Legislature also the existing voting strength should be increased three times, the necessary qualifications being determined by the expert Franchise Committee.



*Chairman*: I should like to suggest this for your consideration. I do not see how we can really pronounce any opinion on this unless and until we know, for instance, what the size of the Central Federal Legislature is going to be. If it is going to be a Legislature of 800 to 1,000, I can understand that one form of franchise is practicable; if, on the other hand, it is going to be a Legislature of 200, another form of franchise becomes necessary. How can we make any pronouncement at all when we do not know what the size of the Legislature is going to be? Is not this all we can possibly usefully do, to say that the question of the franchise, if there is to be a directly elected Federal Chamber, must be related to and dependent on the size and composition of that Chamber, and that in the absence of any knowledge of what that is and of any right to decide what it shall be we cannot usefully make any recommendations, beyond pointing out that it seems to us probable that, unless that Legislature is going to consist of a very large number of people, some definite reduction in the number of persons entitled to vote will be essential.

*Lieut.-Colonel Gidney*: Some higher qualification.

*Chairman*: Yes, some higher qualification will be essential. I suggest we leave it vague like that, making it plain that in absence of knowledge of what the Central Chamber is going to be like we cannot make more detailed suggestions.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I was told the question of direct or indirect elections was being decided by the Federal sub-Committee.

*Mr. Joshi*: If indirect election means election by the Provincial Legislatures it is one thing, but if it means what I suggested—say a hundred voters electing a secondary voter, and so on—it is a different thing. I do not know what you mean by indirect election.

*Chairman*: We do not know either. It is not for us.

*Mr. Joshi*: We speak here of direct and indirect election. In my judgment if we have an Assembly which is not elected by the Provincial Legislatures we can regard that as being a directly elected body.

*Chairman*: You had better leave it to me, perhaps, to make some draft report which we can consider at the report stage.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: It is now evident, at least to myself and some of my friends, that we shall have to record a note of dissent from certain propositions that will be placed before the sub-Committee. Will it be permissible for us to submit to you a note of dissent on the various points, which you may be kind enough to append to the report, or will you allow us some other method?

*Chairman*: I do not think that up to the present any of the sub-Committees have appended minority reports, as it were; I think the report of the sub-Committee has been one report, but has indicated on its face that certain members—naming them if necessary—have dissented.



*Dr. Ambedkar*: I should like, with your permission to point out one disadvantage which I see in that procedure. If we are not allowed to record our minute of dissent, you do not give us an opportunity to put our suggestions in a concrete form, which we should like to do if we may be allowed to do so. We are allowed the negative liberty of saying we do not agree, and that is all.

*Chairman*: I am not sure we cannot meet you. I think you have made your objection quite clear. What you want really is adult suffrage, and I think we have got a sentence in to indicate that certain members of our sub-Committee—naming them—objected to this because they thought the system of adult suffrage was the only satisfactory system. That states the point.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: What we should do would depend on the report.

*Chairman*: Let us leave the difficulty until it arises, and then see if we cannot meet you. I think we can.

*Sir Hubert Carr*: Apart from the danger of overlapping there is the danger of something slipping through. I have in mind the question of representation. The Provincial sub-Committee has already reported without saying anything about representation, and here we have discussed suffrage but have not dealt with representation. The representation of minorities will come before the Minorities Committee.

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: And of special interests.

*Sir Hubert Carr*: But when it comes to this question of urban and rural representation, I am not quite sure where that will be discussed.

*Mr. Joshi*: The composition of the Legislatures.

*Chairman*: I will mention that point, if I may, and see what had better be done about it. You refer to such questions as the size of the Provincial Legislatures?

*Sir Hubert Carr*: And the qualifications of the candidates for the Provincial Legislatures.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: And whether urban and rural should be separated.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: They are separated already.

*Begum Shah Nawaz*: They are in my Province.

*Chairman*: I will have a note made of that, Sir Hubert, and mention it when we meet again to consider our report on these matters.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: I should like to draw your attention to one more point on which enquiry may be made, namely, whether the Federal sub-Committee is going to report on direct or indirect elections for the Central Legislature, for both Chambers or for one Chamber, and what we are expected to do—whether as a franchise committee we should give an opinion on what sort of franchise there



should be for the Lower House or not. If they are going to do that I would rather not do it here.

*A Member:* That is Heading No. 4 for the Federal sub-Committee.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir:* Then I have nothing further to say.

*(The sub-Committee adjourned at 4-40 p.m.).*

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI.  
(FRANCHISE) HELD ON 1ST JANUARY, 1931.

DRAFT REPORT.

1. . . . .

2. The sub-Committee met on the 19th, 22nd, and 30th of December, 1930 and on the 1st of January, 1931, and have authorised me to present this Report.

3. In our discussion of the franchise principles we have found that they were closely connected with questions which more properly concern the composition of the legislatures, the nature of the constituencies, and the qualifications for candidates for election. These points have not been considered in the sub-Committee as they fall outside its terms of reference but we are of opinion that they should be examined by a competent body since the efficacy of any franchise system depends as much on these points as on the qualifications for the franchise.

4. *Extension of the Franchise.*—While it was generally held that adult suffrage was the goal which should ultimately be attained, it was agreed that the basis of the franchise could forthwith be broadened and that a large increase was desirable.

Some difference of opinion existed as to the extent to which this was practicable in present circumstances, and it was realised that the sub-Committee had not the necessary material to determine the precise limits of the advance. The Statutory Commission suggested such an increase in the number of electors as would bring that number up to ten per cent. of the total population. Some of our members thought that an increase to twenty-five per cent. of the adult population was immediately practicable.

We recommend that an expert Franchise Commission should be appointed with instructions to provide for the immediate increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than ten per cent. of the total population and indeed a larger number—but not more than twenty-five per cent. of the total population—if that should, on a full investigation, be found practicable and desirable.

We recommend that, in addition to providing for this increase, the Commission should consider the introduction of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote would be grouped together in primary groups of about 20, for the election of one



representative member from each group, who would be entitled to vote in the Provincial elections either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters or in separate constituencies to be formed for them.

(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, and Mr. Srinivasan regard these proposals as only "second best" and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir P. C. Mitter, and Mr. Basu do not assent to the maximum or minimum we have suggested, but desire the discretion of the Franchise Commission to be entirely unfettered.).

5. *Uniformity of Qualifications for the Franchise.*—We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualifications should be the same for all communities; but we desire that the Franchise Commission in making their proposals should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its numbers and that the Commission should so contrive their franchise system as to secure this result in so far as it may be practicable.

(Sardar Sampuran Singh dissents from the latter part of this conclusion).

6. *Property Qualification.*—We consider that there should be a property qualification for the franchise and that in this connection the word "property" should be understood in its widest sense as including not only the ownership of landed property but also the occupation of landed or house property or the receipt of income or wages whether in cash or kind.

7. *Educational Qualification.*—We are of opinion that the Franchise Commission should consider the possibility of framing a suitable educational qualification as an additional qualification for the franchise, bearing in mind the ideal enunciated at the end of paragraph 5.

8. *Military Service Qualification.*—We are agreed that the existing Military Service qualification should be retained and we recommend that the Franchise Commission should consider the extension of this qualification so as to include service in the Auxiliary and Territorial Forces.

9. *Special Franchise Qualification for Women.*—We observe that under the existing franchise the number of women voters is infinitesimal as compared with that of men. No system of franchise can be considered as satisfactory, or as likely to lead to good government where such a great disparity exists between voting strength of the two sexes. We do not anticipate that the recommendations we have already made will reduce this disparity, nor do we think that they provide sufficiently for the enfranchisement of women. We therefore agree that special qualifications should be prescribed for women but we feel that there is not sufficient



material before us to justify an attempt to formulate these special qualifications. We therefore recommend that the Franchise Commission should devote special attention to this question in the light of all the evidence available including the recommendations of the Statutory Commission and the suggestion made in this sub-Committee that the age limit mentioned in the proposals of the Statutory Commission should be lowered from 25 to 21.

10. *The Franchise for Special Constituencies.*—We are of opinion that the franchise qualifications for special constituencies depend essentially on the nature of those constituencies. We are not empowered to consider the latter point nor are we in possession of information as to what special constituencies are contemplated. These questions require examination by a competent body. So far as the franchise aspect has been discussed in this sub-Committee a division of opinion has shown itself as to the desirability of permitting a voter qualified in both a general and a special constituency to vote in both.

11. *Urban and Rural Enfranchisement.*—We are of opinion that the Franchise Commission should endeavour so to adjust the franchise qualifications as to remove in those areas where it may exist any marked disparity in the operation of the franchise qualifications in urban as compared with rural areas.

12. *The Residential Requirement.*—We are of opinion that the residential qualification for the vote required by the electoral rules of certain Provinces should be abolished.

13. *The Future Electorate.*—We consider it inadvisable to lay down any programme of automatic extensions of the franchise. We prefer that it should be left to each Provincial Legislature to extend its franchise at its discretion after the lapse of 10 years from the date of the introduction of the new Constitutions.

14. *Franchise for the Central or Federal Legislature.*—The form of the Central or Federal Legislature has not yet been decided and in these circumstances we find it impossible to offer more than an observation of a very general character on a suitable franchise system for any directly elected Chamber that may be constituted. Assuming that there is to be some element of direct election it may be found practicable to enlarge the existing electorate for the Legislative Assembly according to the general principles which underlie our recommendations for increasing the provincial electorates; and in so far as this is practicable we should consider it desirable. The danger of an unwieldy electorate is however a real one unless the number of representatives to be elected is very large, and in that event the elected body would itself become unwieldy.

## DISCUSSION.

*Chairman:* We will take this Draft Report section by section.

Section 1 merely sets out the terms of reference, and the Delegates. I take it that is agreed. (*Agreed to.*)



Section 2 merely records the dates on which we sat. (*Agreed to*).

Are there any objections to paragraph No. 3?

*Sir Hubert Carr*: I should like, with regard to the words "by a competent body," to bring in some suggestion like "by a body of this Conference," because I feel that the question of the qualification of candidates for the legislature is really one of principle.

*Chairman*: Would this meet your point, Sir Hubert: supposing we said "should be further examined" and leave out the words "by a competent body"? I do not think it is for us to dictate to the Conference, or even suggest to them, what they should do about it. It is not within our terms of reference.

*Sir Hubert Carr*: Very well.

*Chairman*: It is suggested that before the word "examined" we should put in the word "further", and leave out the words "by a competent body." Is that agreed to? (*Agreed to*).

Are there any remarks on paragraph No. 4?

*Dr. Ambedkar*: I beg to move an amendment to paragraph 4, namely, that in the second section, line 2, to add the following words after the word "practicable"—"with the electoral machinery available in present circumstances". It would then read "Some difference of opinion existed as to the extent to which this was practicable with the electoral machinery available in present circumstances".

*Several Members*: There are other grounds.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: That is my amendment. I leave it to the Chairman as the best judge to sum up the sense of the Committee, but the impression that was left upon my mind was that the majority of those who opposed universal adult suffrage as being practical politics for the immediate future did so mainly upon the ground that there was not sufficient electoral machinery in India to cope with the situation if everybody was allowed to vote.

*Chairman*: I do not think myself, Dr. Ambedkar, that that was the sole ground on which the matter was put. It was one of the main grounds, but in recording the view of the Committee I do not think we should limit ourselves to saying that that was the sole ground. For instance, the difficulty of communications, and the lack of facilities for travel, and so on, were also very much stressed.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: I would rather like to have it made clear in the Report.

*Mr. Joshi*: You might put in some such words as "practical electioneering difficulties".

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: But there are other objections.

*Mr. Joshi*: We are talking of the general majority, and not of those people who do not want to vote on principle.



*Chairman* : I think what is already stated meets the point. After all, you and Mr. Joshi come in under the note at the end.

*Dr. Ambedkar* : I quite see that. Although we stand for the ideal, we may have to accept the second best, but we should like to have the second best as good as it can possibly be made. I think my point ought to be made clear, so that the expert Franchise Committee might consider it.

*Chairman* : I do not think that would meet the majority of the Committee. I think the majority of the Committee would rather feel that the words should not be qualified. Very well.

Now what about the next sentence beginning " We recommend that an Expert Franchise Commission should be appointed with instructions to provide for the immediate increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than ten per cent. of the total population and indeed a larger number—but not more than twenty-five per cent. of the total population—if that should, on a full investigation, be found practicable and desirable ".

*Dr. Ambedkar* : I have an amendment on page 3. Instead of the words " but not " I should like to have the words " and even " substituted.

*Chairman* : Many of us felt, and I am one of them, that an immediate increase of twenty-five per cent. was straining it somewhat, and I do not think we should be asked to strain it further. Again, you come in under your reservation, Dr. Ambedkar.

*Dr. Ambedkar* : My second amendment is to strike out the words " and desirable ". This matter, whatever increase is desirable or not, is really one which must be decided by this Committee. It cannot be decided by the Expert Franchise Commission. That Commission is to be appointed to devise ways and means to carry into effect the decisions we take. How much increase is desirable is certainly a matter which cannot be left to the competence of the new Franchise Commission. From that point of view I think it is necessary to drop these words.

*Chairman* : It is very difficult to separate what is practicable and what is desirable. " Practicable " is an elastic word. It may be a very difficult thing to achieve or it may be a comparatively easy thing to achieve; but it may be possible of achievement and therefore you will say it is practicable. In considering the desirability, you can hardly shut out of your mind the extent to which the thing is practicable. The two must come in together to a certain extent.

*Dr. Ambedkar* : We have decided that in our opinion an extension which covers twenty-five per cent. of the population is desirable.

*Chairman* : You use such an elastic word as " practicable ". That is the difficulty I feel. You cannot put the two words in completely watertight compartments. What is practicable must react on what is desirable, and you use a very elastic word. I think it



would be wiser to keep both there. We give a clear view of our indication by saying at the very outset that we look forward to adult suffrage as an ideal.

*Mr. Joshi*: I propose that we should amend this paragraph in this way: "increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than twenty-five per cent". You state below that we consider this to be the second best. I am prepared to consider my amended proposition as a second best, but not the one which is proposed.

*Chairman*: Does that mean that if we put it in in that way you would be prepared to strike out your name from the dissent at the end?

*Mr. Joshi*: No. I am prepared to say that it is a second best.

*Chairman*: I think we had better leave it as it is. Is that the sense of the Meeting?

*Mr. B. V. Jadhav*: In that case the word "adult" in the second section of No. 4—page 2, third line from the bottom—should be struck out.

*Chairman*: Yes. That word should go out I think.

*Sir Chimanlal Setalvad*: Some people held the view that it should be twenty-five per cent. of the adult population.

*Lord Zetland*: If you have "adult" in one place you must have it in the other as well.

*Chairman*: We had a discussion on this at the time. There was some little confusion. It was made plain that what was meant was total population. After saying that the Simon Commission recommend ten per cent. of the total population, we then record that some of our members thought that an increase up to twenty-five per cent. of the "total population", it should read, is practicable. Over the page we make our recommendation that there should be an attempt to enfranchise ten per cent. of the total population, and indeed a larger number, but not more than twenty-five per cent. of the total population, if that is found practicable and desirable. The word clearly should be "total". We will accept that amendment.

Now what about the paragraph beginning "We recommend that".

*Raja of Parlakimedi*: The idea is to ensure the getting of a great percentage of rural people into the Legislature. As such I would suggest that they would have a separate constituency of their own, and we might say specifically that they should have separate constituencies.

*Chairman*: We thought we had better leave it quite open, as we have done here, because it really is hardly within our purview.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao*: It does commit us to the statement that they may be grouped in the same constituency. I am not prepared to commit myself to saying now that these people who come in by grouping should come into the same constituency.



*Chairman* : Have you any objection to saying that the Commission should consider the introduction of a scheme? That is all they are asked to do. We have not had the material or the time or the knowledge to look into these things. All I want is some expert body to go into this matter and consider it.

*Sir P. C. Mitter* : I have no objection to the Draft but I would like it to be added that in my opinion it would defeat the object of giving the rural voters more representation if you bring them in the same constituency.

*Chairman* : You do not mind them considering it?

*Sir P. C. Mitter* : No, but I want you to add, if you will, that in the opinion of one member of the Committee it will defeat the object.

*Chairman* : It does not give any instructions to anybody. This does not commit us at all. All we are saying is that some body, to be constituted, should consider this question in both aspects.

*Sir P. C. Mitter* : Very well, I do not press my point.

*Diwan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao* : May I suggest putting in the words "or in some other suitable manner" after the words "in primary groups of about twenty"?

*Chairman* : I do not mind.

*Mr. Joshi* : I have an objection in principle to allowing these words to stand "in the same constituencies". This really means that we are creating a low kind of citizenship for the poorer classes of people. I quite understand individuals saying that the poor people must wait on account of the difficulties of perfecting our electoral machinery, but we are now suggesting that we should create electorate machinery by which the poorer people will be placed on a lower citizenship right. We are stating that the Expert Committee may consider that a group of twenty people should be practically made equal to one propertied man. I think this is absolutely wrong in principle. If a system of indirect election like the one suggested is practicable and good for the poorer classes of people, let us recommend a wholesale scheme of indirect election for all people.

But let us not accept the principle as we are accepting it here that the citizenship right of the poorer people is lower than that of the others. Therefore I propose that these words should be deleted "in the same constituency". I do not mind there being two separate constituencies.

*Chairman* : The point is this. If you do not do this you leave these people out altogether.

*Mr. Joshi* : I am not against separate constituencies.

*Chairman* : Your view is that you ought to have adult suffrage at once, and that is recorded, but if you are not going to have adult suffrage at once, if you are only going to enfranchise up to 25 per cent. of the total population, the question is, are you going to keep



the other people altogether out of it, or are you going to consider whether there is not some scheme by which those people who otherwise would be out of it could come into it.

*Mr. Joshi*: I am ready to have separate constituencies for them.

*Chairman*: Should this Commission consider both? We are only asking it to consider it.

*Rao Bahadur Dayal Seth*: I propose instead of the words "in addition to" the word should be "while", because if you have "in addition to" it would mean an increase over and above 25 per cent. of the maximum.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I am going to speak on that point in a moment.

*Mr. Shiva Rao*: Should not it be clear that this is only during a period of transition, till we reach adult franchise? This proposal should not be for all time.

*Mr. Foot*: We cannot legislate for all time.

*Lord Zetland*: I would point out that in another part of our report we recommend that after 10 years the Legislative Council should be in a position to alter the franchise.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq*: So far as the Report is concerned, our assent to these proposals was subject to separate electorates being maintained. If that is made clear somewhere in the report I do not mind. It makes a difference to me. I do not want to take up the time of the Committee, as many viewpoints have been noted, and I submit that my viewpoint may be taken note of.

*Mr. Joshi*: We should understand how separate electorates affect this proposal.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq*: Then I have to explain. If you broaden the franchise and bring in a large number of electors, so far as these proposals are concerned there will be greater disparity between Muhammadan and non-Muhammadan electors than there is at present. Therefore if there are no separate electorates, many of these proposals would have to be reconsidered. I submit that we give our assent to the proposals subject to the fact that we assume that separate electorates will be maintained.

*Chairman*: We had better put in a note of your conditional assent.

*Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq*: If you will do so.

*Chairman*: I do not know who else would like to subscribe to that note.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: We assume that we have in this Committee nothing to do with separate electorates.

*Chairman*: That is right; still, if anybody desires to record a note of dissent or conditional assent I cannot prevent it. We will consider that.



*Rao Bahadur Dayal Seth*: I want the word "while" instead of the words "in addition to". It should not be "in addition to". That makes a very great difference.

*Chairman*: It is difficult to follow this. I understand that you want to do this on page 3, line 7: strike out the words "in addition to", and put in, what?

*Rao Bahadur Dayal Seth*: The word "while."

*Chairman*: "We recommend that, while providing for this increase, the Commission should consider", etc. That is how it would then read.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: That is quite correct, because in fixing the minimum and maximum, by having the words "in addition to" there will be an increase of about three or four per cent. to the limit already fixed.

*Mr. Foot*: If I understood the argument that we had in the course of the debate it was this. We had many urgent speeches on behalf of adult suffrage. That was demurred to by other members of the Committee. Then the Marquess of Zetland said that whilst that may be looked upon as the right ideal ultimately, another course could be taken that might help to achieve the same purpose without committing ourselves to adult suffrage, and he then put forward a scheme the purpose of which was as far as possible to bring all the people—all the adult population of India—into association with their Government, and he in express terms said it was put forward with a view to meeting the suggestion made by Mr. Joshi and others, which was opposed by some on the other side of the room, and if we take out the words "in addition to" and substitute the word "while", we shall certainly take away a good deal of the preliminary argument upon which Lord Zetland based his case.

*Chairman*: No.

*Rao Bahadur Dayal Seth*: No, not as far as I remember. The Marquess of Zealand agreed; this was to give an additional qualification, and then there is the maximum of 25 per cent.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: No, that is not what is here. I find here: "Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir P. C. Mitter, and Mr. Basu do not assent to the maximum or minimum we have suggested, but desire the discretion of the Franchise Commission to be entirely unfettered." That would mean that we had no ideas of our own at all, and that we left the whole thing to the Franchise Commission to be appointed. I do not think that is quite correct, as far as I am concerned. I have very definite ideas—

*Mr. Foot*: On a point of order: are we discussing at present the amendment?

*Chairman*: I think it would be better if you would not mind, because the note of dissent really concerns yourself, and we must put in whatever you desire to put in. You tell us what you want to put in and that goes. So far as the substance of the clause is



concerned, may we dispose of this point "in addition to" first of all? I am not sure that I follow the point which is being put. May I see that I do? We have previously recommended that the franchise be extended at any rate up to 10 per cent., and if possible up to 25 per cent. of the total population. We recommend that in addition to those voters directly enfranchised there should be a body of voters indirectly enfranchised by this system. I take it the point of substituting the word "while" for the words "in addition to" is this, that you want to make it plain that the indirect voters are not to be included in your total of 25 per cent. Is that it?

*Rao Bahadur Dayal Seth*: It is not only that. If you are going to have this provision here, it means you are going to broaden the franchise over and above 25 per cent., and your maximum of 25 per cent. does not stand. Therefore you remove that maximum of 25 per cent.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: That is only for those who are directly represented.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan*: If the Committee that is to be set up finds that it is both practicable and desirable to go even beyond the 25 per cent. and they want to make this in addition, I do not suppose anybody will have any objection. I do not anticipate that this will operate in any shape or form.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: We do not want to fix a minimum or maximum that is not practicable or desirable. We have limited the discussion of the Franchise Committee to be set up to 25 per cent., but by putting the words "in addition to" we extend that limit to the extent of three per cent.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: Much more.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh*: It may be more, but to the extent of three or four per cent., so we are extending the limit and going beyond what we have already recommended before. If you substitute the word "while" you will be within the minimum and the maximum, but you are giving an opportunity to the Franchise Committee to explore this system also whereby all those adult people who are not enfranchised otherwise will have an opportunity of exercising it.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: Sir, I was just mentioning the wording of this dissent of ours. I am speaking for myself now.

There are no ideas of our own in wanting to leave everything to the Commission to be appointed. That is not quite correct. I would much rather, even at the risk of delaying the proceedings of this Committee for a few minutes—which I have no desire to do unnecessarily—recount what I have said. Sir, it quite correctly expresses my dissent in one way that I do not agree with the paragraphs—

*Chairman*: Are you on this amendment to insert the words "in addition to" instead of the word "while"?



*Sir C. Jehangir*: No; I thought that was finished.

*Chairman*: Do let us dispose of this amendment. The amendment proposed is to strike out the words "in addition to" and to put in the word "while".

*Mr. Jadhav*: I oppose; I think it should stand as it is.

*Chairman*: I agree; I think it should stand as it is.

*Rao Bahadur Dayal Seth*: Then I have nothing more to say.

*Chairman*: We had better take it line by line. Will anybody interrupt if they have an amendment to propose: "We recommend that, in addition to providing for this increase, the Commission should consider the introduction of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote would be grouped together in primary groups of about 20,"—then it is proposed to insert "or in some other suitable manner".

Is there any objection?

—"for the election of one representative member from each group, who would be entitled to vote in the Provincial elections either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters or in separate constituencies to be formed for them."

"(Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, and Mr. Srinivasan regard these proposals as only 'second best' and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.)"

*Dr. Ambedkar*: I should like to say that Mr. K. T. Paul was also of the same opinion as ourselves.

*Chairman*: That will be noted.

*Mr. Joshi*: I propose that instead of the words "second best" the words "quite inadequate" should be substituted.

*Chairman*: That is really a matter for you gentlemen. If you prefer those words "quite inadequate" instead of the words "second best," that is a matter for you really. So it will read: "Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Srinivasan and Mr. K. T. Paul regard these proposals as quite inadequate and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable."

*Mr. Jadhav*: My name also should be added to that list.

*Chairman*: A note will be made of that. Then it goes on: "Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir P. C. Mitter, and Mr. Basu do not assent to the maximum or minimum we have suggested, but desire the discretion of the Franchise Commission to be entirely unfettered." Obviously that is a matter for them to say what they want.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I will speak for myself. It does not quite represent my views, because the meaning of this dissent would be really that I personally have no views of my own, and was prepared to give this Commission that is to be appointed an absolutely free hand. I am not prepared to do that. I am not in agreement with



the paragraphs as they have been drafted at present and now accepted by this Committee, for two reasons: firstly, I am not in favour of extending the franchise to 25 per cent. of the population direct straightaway; secondly, the paragraph suggested at the initiative of Lord Zetland really amounts to adult franchise exercised by an indirect system. That is what it amounts to. Therefore the report if clearly understood means that at first you desire to enfranchise 25 per cent. of the population, if desirable and practicable, giving them the direct vote. In addition to that you desire that all the remaining adults, men and women, should be enfranchised, who should exercise that vote under the indirect system of election. That is what this report comes to in short.

*Chairman:* I think there is substance in this. This is only a matter for you; you can put in exactly what you like. If you will tell us what you want in, we will put it in. Read out the words you want.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* I may be allowed to explain, because this is a most important matter. There is very strong feeling in India, and it is impossible to condense it into two or three words because—

*Chairman:* I must make this plain. The Committee have passed this matter; we have passed it and we cannot go back to it. It is only a question of what you want as recording your dissent. We will put in anything you like if you will read out to us what you want. We cannot re-argue the thing.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* I desire to propose another scheme, which is this, and I desire to put that in my own name if it is necessary and comes to it, if nobody else is there. I desire that there should be both a direct and indirect system of election; that for the indirect elections 25 per cent. of the population not entitled to the direct vote should be enfranchised, who should be the electors of colleges, consisting of 50 for each provincial legislature: the electoral colleges should elect one member to the Legislature.

That means, Sir, that as to the direct elections I would not change the franchise at all and allow the remaining 50 per cent. of the Legislature to be elected as they are elected to-day under the present franchise. It comes to this, that really 25 per cent. of the population will exercise the right of voting.

Under the direct system all those enfranchised at present will get a direct vote. Of the remaining adults, men and women, 25 per cent. of the population will get the vote. By lowering the franchise greater numbers will come in. You can let 25 per cent. of the population get the vote. They should elect electoral colleges consisting of fifty for each seat in the Legislature. I desire to put that in as a suggestion from myself rather than say that I will leave the whole thing to the Franchise Committee.

*Chairman:* I feel very great difficulty about this. We did not have this matter raised before at the sub-Committee. We cannot have a minority report. I suggest that the best thing for you to say is that you record your dissent from these proposals and consi-



der that the matter should be achieved, if at all, by a different plan. You could simply leave it in that way, making it plain that you do not in any way bind yourself to this. Short of a minority report I think that that is the best way in which to deal with the matter. We do not have minority reports.

*Sir Cowasji Jehangir*: It will have to be raised at the Plenary Sessions. I do not want to waste the time either of this Committee or of the Plenary Sessions. I thought that if I put down these seven or eight lines it would save time.

*Chairman*: How far would this meet you: "Sir C. Jehangir objects to any increase of the direct electorate"?

*Sir C. Jehangir*: That will not represent my views. I would rather that you put down what you first said.

*Chairman*: "Sir C. Jehangir records his dissent from these proposals, and considers that the basis of the franchise should be broadened, if at all, by another plan."

*Sir C. Jehangir*: Yes; by another system or by another plan.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I would also add that in my opinion the franchise should not be broadened unduly until at least two elections are over.

*Mr. Joshi*: If you put that in then we are entitled to put in what we think.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I am not putting in any scheme. I am expressing my opinion.

*Chairman*: If you will forgive my saying so there has to be a certain amount of give and take with regard to this matter. We have all to help one another to make this thing go through. I should suggest, that if you recorded your agreement with Sir Cowasji Jehangir, that is what it really amounts to, because the rest are really the reasons for your disagreeing with the majority. Is it not enough to state: "I do disagree"? You need not go on to state why, since that raises a difficulty, and there has to be a good deal of give and take.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I am not so concerned with the reason as with the conclusion. As has been pointed out the conclusion here is based on a number of reasons. I am not trying to put in a scheme. I quite appreciate that it is objectionable to put in a scheme. We are trying to build up a future electoral system. If you think that I ought not to insist upon it I will leave it to you, but I mention it, and it has been taken down. I feel very strongly upon it and it is so fundamental. I am not asking anybody to agree with me.

*Chairman*: You are a model member of a Committee. You do display the real principle of give and take because you leave it to me. I should suggest that the point is sufficiently met by your recording your agreement with the note of dissent of Sir Cowasji Jehangir. I am very much obliged to you.

*Sir P. C. Mitter*: I am satisfied as long as I have mentioned it.



*Mr. Basu:* Speaking from my own experience of electorates, I think that a much greater extension is likely to attain the object which Sir P. C. Mitter has in view. You want to pacify the people, and, after all, the contentment of the people is what is required of us. The only point on which I differ from the finding in this report is that I think that no maximum should be fixed. If in fixing the electorate it is found that the number in fact exceeds 25 per cent. that should go through. That is the only point upon which I differ. Let there be the minimum, but I think that there should be no maximum.

*Chairman:* Mr. Basu, I do not know if you will follow Sir P. C. Mitter's excellent example. You have been good enough to explain your views very cogently, and I quite follow them. I should suggest really that there is no reason why you should record a dissent at all, because, after all, you are leaving to this Commission an immediate increase up to 25 per cent. of the total electorate, plus this mukhi system for all those not enfranchised, plus the fact that in the course of ten years the Provincial Councils have complete liberty to alter the thing as they like. I should suggest that, so far as any possible maximum is concerned, you have there all that you can possibly want.

*Mr. Basu:* What I am afraid of is that if you mention a maximum here that may form part of the Statute. I do not want a maximum to form part of the Statute.

*Chairman:* This is not a matter for the Statute, but merely for the Expert Committee.

*Mr. Basu:* It will ultimately have to be put into the Statute.

*Chairman:* These are, at the most, guide posts. They are not things like what are in the Statute. Do you think that you can accommodate us, Mr. Basu?

*Mr. Joshi:* It is quite clear that Mr. Basu's name must come out from association with Sir Cowasji Jehangir.

*Mr. Basu:* It is not a question of name, but it is a question of faith in facts.

*Chairman:* I think that you had better agree with the rest of us.

*Mr. Basu:* I think that you had better scratch my name off. Very well, I will agree.

*Chairman:* "Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Sir P. C. Mitter record their dissent from these proposals, and consider, that the basis of the franchise should be broadened, if at all, by another system."

We now come to (5) "Uniformity of qualifications for the franchise."

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* I suggest that the words after the words "all communities" should be deleted. I suggest that the words should be deleted: "but we desire that the Franchise Commission in making their proposals should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting



strength proportional to its numbers and that the Commission should so contrive their franchise system as to secure this result in so far as it may be practicable." Those words are quite inconsistent with the words expressed in the previous sentence. When the franchise qualification is lowered, automatically the proportion of the voting strength and the population strength would become the same, but if you lay down this principle in this paragraph you would have to devise some artificial means by which the communities whose voting strength was not so high would get a larger voting strength. In that case you would be introducing an invidious distinction, in particular in villages. A man belonging to a particular community in one village and paying a certain amount of revenue will not be qualified to be a voter, whereas a man belonging to another community will be a voter. That is why I say that, if the object is to have the same kind of property qualification, and the same qualifications for all communities, then the sentiments expressed in that sentence are quite inconsistent, and the words ought to be deleted.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* Which is the sentence which you want deleted?

*Chairman:* It is the whole of the sentence except the first two lines.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* "should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its numbers." It would automatically come with adult suffrage.

*Chairman:* I think, Sardar Ujjal Singh, that we had better put your name in after the name of Sardar Sampuran Singh. You both want to record your dissent. That meets you, does it not?

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* I really want to know whether it is consistent with the previous sentence.

*Chairman:* The rest of us have agreed to it. I think that what we had better do is to put your name in as dissenting together with Sardar Sampuran Singh.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* As you please.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* We have submitted a note of dissent to this paragraph.

*Chairman:* Have you? I thought that this was agreed.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* I would beg the Committee to consider what this paragraph means.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* It does not mean anything.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* You say that in giving adult franchise the qualifications should be the same for all communities. Having said that, you go on to say "but we desire that the Franchise Commission in making their proposals should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its numbers." When you say



that the voting strength ought to be brought to the same level as the population, I do not know how you are going to achieve that end unless you want to make some distinction in the qualifications.

*Chairman:* You are dealing with a given area. We all agree that the Franchise Commission may have a different franchise qualification in one area to the franchise qualification which they have in another area.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* When it says "in any given area" it must mean a province. It does not mean a particular village or a particular district, but it means one province.

*Mr. Shiva Rao:* Not necessarily.

*Chairman:* It does not necessarily mean one province, if you will forgive my saying so. We discussed particularly the word "area," and we put in the word "area" because it did not necessarily mean a province.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* Then I beg to differ. I would like to put in the word "province." This is going too far, and it is making a distinction between one district and another, and between one village and another.

*Sir R. Hamilton:* As expressed here it is much wider than we wanted.

*Chairman:* "Province" is too narrow, and "area" is too wide.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I think that the word "area" is all right.

*Major Stanley:* This paragraph is dealing only with equality of franchise for all communities in the area. The paragraph really does cover it. Surely we do not want in an area smaller than a province to make distinctions as regards franchise between the various communities.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* There are at present differences.

*Major Stanley:* Not for various communities in one area.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* Does this proposal say that there shall be differences as regards franchise for various communities?

*Chairman:* No.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* Therefore, unless you adopt that principle of varying the franchise for the different communities you really cannot produce equality of voting strength for the different communities.

*Sir R. Hamilton:* You can lower the franchise so much that you very nearly bring in that proportion.

*Mr. Basu:* Let us take a practical illustration and see how the difficulty is to be met. There is a certain area in which there are one hundred persons who are adults, who would be in the ordinary course entitled to vote. Sixty of them are, say, caste Hindus and forty of them belong to the backward classes. The object of the Franchise Commission should be to fix the franchise at a limit.



which should bring on the electoral roll a proportion of voters which would be the same as the proportion of the people in the various communities.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* That would be impossible under uniform franchise, I submit.

*Mr. Zafrullah Khan:* I believe that the wording of the draft Report is perfectly correct from all points of view. If you have uniform qualifications within the same area for all the communities that is the principle which we have sought to lay down. As to whether it is practicable is another matter. Even supposing that the criticism is correct that if you have a uniform property qualification you will not be able to achieve that, there are various other qualifications and each of those qualifications may not operate to the same proportion with each community. For instance, in one particular area the property qualification might bring in a very large number of voters of one community; the military qualification might bring in a very large number of voters of another community: the literacy qualification might bring in a very large number of voters of another community. It is for the expert Franchise Commission to consider in detail what are the qualifications by combining which in a particular area they would as far as possible get approximately the same number of voters, if that is practicable, in each community. That is one way in which it might work. In one particular area one community may have a very high property qualification, and another may have a high military qualification. I can conceive that that can happen in various parts of the Punjab. What we insist upon is that the Committee shall not say: "In this particular area in one community anybody who is serving in the army shall come in as a voter, but no other member of any community who is not a soldier." If you enable anybody to come in on any qualification everybody should be able to come in no matter which community he belongs to. The different sets of qualifications might operate differently in the various communities. I do not say that the Committee will necessarily be able to define such a bundle of qualifications that what we desire to achieve will necessarily be achieved. I do not know how far that may be practicable, but we leave the decision to them.

With regard to the second question, whether we should have in the word "area" or the word "province", in my submission the word "area" is preferable to the word "province". We have seen that the word "province" is necessarily narrow. It will be impracticable to say that in one province throughout, uniform qualifications should operate. We have seen that at present they do not. For instance, in the city of Bombay the qualification for a voter to get on to the register with regard to the rent is probably different to that in other places. We have seen that there are differences in different districts. Therefore, I do not see any kind of objection to there being differences. For instance, there are different rural qualifications in Sind and in Bombay. The appre-



hension seems to be that this leaves a possibility that in districts and areas similarly constituted different qualifications might be devised, but we are not leaving that to any particular interests or to any particular community. The whole question will be gone into by the expert Franchise Commission, and, unless there are very good reasons for making a difference, I am sure that they will not make a difference. For instance, it may be that in a very big town a property of very high value may carry a low rental, or property of a low value may carry a high rental, which in effect may be equal to property of a different value in smaller towns. Therefore, although the word "province" is necessarily narrow, the word "area" will not necessarily lead to different qualifications for different parts of the same province. I therefore, submit that on both grounds the draft is correct.

*Major Stanley:* I cannot help feeling that there is still a certain amount of misunderstanding with regard to this paragraph. I think that the last speaker has quite overlooked the fact that this qualification refers only to communities, and that this does not at all deal with the possibility of differentiation in franchise qualification either in a province or in an area. It says only that neither in a province nor in an area should there be any difference in the qualifications of different communities. I have no practical experience, and I may be entirely wrong, but it does seem to me that theoretically there is some advantage to be gained by it. The sort of things which I had in mind were two. First of all, there does already exist in some provinces different qualifications for urban and rural voters. That is a matter which the Franchise Commission might well take into consideration, by so fixing the urban and rural franchise that they secure as far as practicable a proportional equality between the communities in the area. The other case which they might well consider is a case such as this: When they were fixing the property qualification in a rural area, for instance, they might find that a qualification of Rs. 12 would produce a great disparity between communities, while the lowering of that qualification to Rs. 10 might go far to dissipate that disparity. Therefore, in theory, at any rate, I do see that it is wise and practicable to allow this discretion to the Expert Committee. It will give them some chance, at any rate, of bringing about the result that we desire.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* While agreeing with the idea underlying the latter portion of this paragraph I cannot help seeing that it is absolutely impracticable. You are setting the Franchise Committee an impossible task. This is no new question. This has been raised before, and it has been turned down on the ground that it is not possible. It has been turned down on more than one occasion. Major Stanley was quite right in saying that it was communities that we were discussing. The educational qualifications of communities are very different, and the property qualifications of communities are very different. If they had not been different we should not have heard of separate electorates. The



very reason that they are so different has given rise in the past to this demand for separate electorates. If you take any small community in any area who have a higher standard of education than the rest, any standard of education will bring on to the electoral roll larger numbers of that community in proportion to their numbers. How are you going to make a distinction unless you make a difference in that area in the educational standards. In one case you might say "a graduate", and in the other you might say "literacy". Not until then can you bring in the same numbers. The position is the same with regard to the property qualification and with regard to every other qualification. Therefore you are setting the Franchise Commission an impossible task. No scale will bring them in. Every scale which you take will have the same disparity in the percentages. In the case of the depressed classes no qualification of any kind will bring in the same proportion on to the electoral roll unless you have adult franchise. You may take it that if you enfranchised 75 per cent. of the population the depressed classes will not get anything like 75 per cent. on the electoral roll; they will get only 10 per cent. How is it possible then to bring in any franchise which would make this principle practicable? You may limit it. I quite agree with the first two lines that in any given area the franchise qualifications should be the same, but I must dissent from the latter part because it is impracticable. I cannot let a thing like this go forward as a principle enunciated by this Committee knowing that it is an impracticable proposition. I think that some of my friends have seen this. I always felt this. It will do a great deal of injustice to some communities. It will be liable to create a great deal of heart-burning and a great deal of trouble, and it will do a great deal of injustice to some communities. I cannot possibly agree to the latter part of this proposition.

*Sir H. Carr:* Are not Sir Cowasji Jehangir's difficulties somewhat met by the fact that we are agreeing to indirect election? That will enable you to remove some of that disparity which, as is so rightly pointed out, it will be difficult for any Franchise Committee to cover. I think that if they have indirect, as well as direct, election they will not find it so difficult to bring up the voting strength of each community in proportion to its population.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* We are talking of each area.

*Sir R. Hamilton:* With regard to paragraph 5, seeing that difficulty is expressed by the Sikh community, and that other criticisms have been made by those best qualified to speak, and that the paragraph is generally condemned as being impracticable, does not the paragraph simply seek to set out an ideal that we may assume will be dominant in the minds of the Committee which is set up? Therefore, inasmuch as the paragraph is being shot at from all sides, can we not eliminate paragraph 5? It is little more than a platitude. We may assume that anything that is valuable in that paragraph, or in the direction indicated by it, will be in the minds of the expert Franchise Commission. If there



is a difficulty in explaining the clause here it may be that we shall be only creating a difficulty for the expert Franchise Commission when they come to interpret its precise meaning.

*Mr. Chintamani:* May I presume to start with, that the word "area" is agreed upon, and that no more discussion is necessary?

*Chairman:* I think that, after what Major Stanley has said, there is no objection to the word "area". The qualifications ought to be the same whether the area is a province or the whole of India. I suggest that the word "area" should remain.

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* I dissent.

*Chairman:* You dissent from the whole paragraph?

*Sardar Ujjal Singh:* Not from the whole paragraph.

*Chairman:* I will put down your dissent to whatever you desire.

*Mr. Chintamani:* Coming to the second part of the paragraph, I assume from the nature of the discussion that we are not merely considering whether the draft Report is a faithful report of the conclusion that we reached at the previous sitting, but we are reconsidering the conclusion that we reached.

*Chairman:* Unfortunately I cannot prevent it.

*Mr. Chintamani:* In the criticisms which have been directed to that paragraph, I think that one or two considerations have been overlooked by the previous speakers. In the first place, that paragraph is not a mandate to any Franchise Commission. The report does not purport to set forth anything more than a few general propositions which in the opinion of this sub-Committee are worthy of serious consideration by the Franchise Commission in framing their own conclusions. It is nothing more than that. If that is the status of this report the next question is whether the proposition embodied in this sentence is or is not on the merits a proposition which it is desirable that that Commission should consider. So far as I have heard the speeches I have heard objections based upon its alleged impracticability, but no one has said that there is something undesirable in it which would make it advisable to omit it. Sir Cowasji Jehangir has said that this suggestion was made several times before and turned down. I should like to know by whom it was turned down.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* I think that the Southborough Franchise Committee considered it.

*Mr. Chintamani:* I do not think so. I was one of the members of that Committee.

*Sir C. Jehangir:* The Simon Commission says something about it.

*Chairman:* The Simon Commission recommends it.

*Mr. Chintamani:* In the Government of India Despatch this recommendation has been specifically made by more than one local Government. I was the man who proposed this to the sub-Com-



mittee at the last meeting. It was not my own idea. I borrowed the idea from the recommendations of the Provincial Governments as I considered that it was a very equitable recommendation which those Governments had made. I do not wish to conceal from this Committee that the Government of India expressed the opinion that this would not be practicable, but they did not say that it was undesirable or improper. All that we are now seeking to do is to say to the Franchise Commission that we consider that this is something desirable to aim at. It will be for them, with the larger mass of facts which they will have before them, to reach a conclusion whether it is something which although desirable is also practicable or not. It is nothing more than that. For these reasons I think that it is desirable that this sentence should stand part of the report.

*Chairman:* I should like to point out if I may that for once only Sir Cowasji Jehangir has been guilty of a little lack of logic, because what is practicable is a wholly different thing to what is desirable. An ideal is an ideal merely because it is not immediately practicable. If it is immediately practicable it is not properly called an ideal at all. All that we say is that a certain system is an ideal system. The use of the word "ideal" in itself implies that it is not immediately practicable. I venture to think that all that it really is is a kind of useful test which the Commission obviously ought to have in their minds when they come to consider the various details. For instance, under the property qualification we are giving them a very wide latitude with regard to what "property" means. We have met Mr. Joshi's view by saying that it shall include income. In the case of the educational qualification there is a very wide latitude, and in the case of the military service qualification there is a very wide latitude. Surely the Committee, when they are considering with regard to any province "Shall we, or shall we not, recommend this property qualification, that educational qualification, or that military service qualification," ought, in considering whether they recommend that, to test it by this test: How will it bear upon the various communities? If a particular recommendation would lead to one community getting a great advantage, then that argument in itself is something against it. There may be other more cogent arguments which, notwithstanding, make them carry it through. I do not think that anybody disputes that it is an ideal, and I do not think that anybody disputes that it is not practicable. All the same, like all ideals, it is a useful thing by which to test what we are doing. I, therefore, suggest that we leave this in, strengthening if you like our phrase by inserting the words "so far as it may be practicable". We might put it in such a way as to show that we realise that it will be impracticable to carry out this ideal to any considerable extent, or something of that sort. I should have thought myself that the words "in so far as it may be practicable" meet the point. It is only an ideal. We hitch our wagon to a star, but we never hope to reach the star.



*Sir C. Jehangir*: It will be an injustice to certain small communities, and that is a very important factor that I have in mind. I will speak perfectly frankly. If you take any small community, such as my own or the Sikhs, if this principle were practicable we would get wiped out. It is not practicable. There is a population in the city of Bombay of one million, two hundred thousand; the population of the Parsees is forty-five thousand; If it was applied (whether it was practicable or not) we would get nothing on the electoral roll. Therefore, the ideal really is between two major communities, Hindus and Muhammadans; that is where the ideal comes in. If you put in the words "between the two major communities" I have no objection to it as an ideal; an impossible ideal, but an ideal. With regard to the Sikhs even it is a very big problem indeed. I do not want to touch upon that communal problem here. That is a very important point. It is a very important problem indeed in the Punjab, and also, if I may say so, for my own community in Bombay. Because it is impracticable I am not afraid of it; otherwise I should have spoken much more strongly. I know that it is impracticable I know that it is impossible, and I am not afraid of it, but I do want to point out that if it did become practicable it would be a great danger to a small community like my own and that of my friend Sardar Ujjal Singh. It would be a danger to small communities of that kind. It is an ideal between Hindus and Muhammadans. Is it an impracticable ideal. I have no objection to your putting it in there. By all means try to get as many Muhammadans on to the electoral roll as are in proportion to their population. Any system to do that is an ideal that I am in favour of, but when it comes to a small community like my own, or Sardar Ujjal Singh's, it is a most unfair and unjust principle which cannot be justified by any argument by any other community. I am glad to say that I feel confident that no other community will try to justify such an argument that the Parsees or the Indian Christians or my friend Colonel Gidney's community should have the number on the electoral roll according to their population.

*Chairman*: We have to distinguish between an ideal and what is practicable. They are two wholly different concepts. Would it meet you if we said "would as nearly as possible give each community"—

*Sir C. Jehangir*: "Major community".

*Chairman*: I was going to suggest "the larger communities".

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I have no objection.

*Chairman*: That would meet you?

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I have no objection at all.

*Chairman*: I do not think that Mr. Chintamani would object to that at all.

*Mr. Chintamani*: I doubt whether it would not be better to leave it out than to change "each community" to "major communities".



*Sir C. Jehangir*: Put in "major communities"

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam*: What is a major community in the whole of India might be a very small community in one part of the country.

*Chairman*: It does not meet with approval, and therefore, I will leave it out.

*Mr. Jadhav*: At present the conditions are that the smaller communities have larger representation on the electoral roll, and if the franchise is altered they have a fear that the advantage they now enjoy will diminish to a certain extent, and I think the objections which are now raised are due to this fear.

*Chairman*: The minor communities are really protected, not so much by the number of voters as by the number of representatives they have, whether they have separate electorates or whether they have joint electorates with reservation. That is in the main their protection.

But in order to try to get a conclusion could not we say this, instead of using the words "each community"—*Mr. Chintamani* put it to me—"We desire that the Franchise Commission in making their proposal should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give the major communities a voting strength in proportion," and so on. I think that would do.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: "The two major communities."

*Chairman*: His point is, he does not want to confine himself to the major communities, but he wants to put it in this way that he is only recommending with regard to the major communities; the minor communities are not the subject matter of the recommendation at all. Cannot you meet him on that?

*Sir C. Jehangir*: It is too dangerous. When you talk about separate electorates, we have no separate electorates and we do not want them.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: It means this, that in order to maintain the advantage of having a large existing electorate the suffrage should not be extended to the majority of the people. That is what it comes to, that in order that *Sir Cowasji Jehangir* should maintain the existing ratio of his population to the electoral strength the other people in the country should not be on the electoral strength.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: All I mean is that the smaller community should not be jeopardised.

*Dr. Ambedkar*: Your position is bound to be jeopardised in any lowering of the franchise, and if you feel that proportionately to the other voters your position goes down, then your safety lies either in trusting to the majority or in asking for separate electorates. But you cannot say: "Because we will be thrown down, we will sink, therefore other communities should not be given it." It comes to nothing else but that.

*Sir C. Jehangir*: I do not say that.



*Chairman:* I am afraid that we will have to take our conclusions. Bear in mind, if you will, that we are agreeing to adult suffrage as an ideal. We have passed that part of the report. I have suggested the words "would as nearly as possible give at least the major communities."

First of all I will put it to the Committee that the words should remain as they are "give, if possible, each community." Who is against that?

A note will be taken that Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Colonel Gidney and Sardar Ujjal Singh dissent from the latter part.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* If you want to place it before the Franchise Committee we should still like to say that in our view the principle of adult suffrage should be applied to the depressed classes.

*Chairman:* We have got that already.

*Mr. Foot:* Otherwise you would put an addendum to each paragraph.

*Chairman:* We cannot have that every time.

*Mr. Jadhav:* Brahmins and non-Brahmins and different communities in Bombay, depressed classes and all should be added.

*Chairman:* We cannot go into that.

Now No. 6. Property Qualification. Is there any objection to No. 6?

No. 7. Educational Qualification. Is there any objection to No. 7?

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* I have no objection except what has been referred to, the word "community" which you find in paragraph 5.

*Chairman:* We are now on paragraph 7.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* I am referring to paragraph 5. In connection with that, we must make clear what we mean by a "community", which might cause a heated discussion in the Plenary Sessions. When I raised that question about the educational qualification it was mainly because of the controversy which is likely to arise between the two communities, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin communities. If we do not make it plain here, we make this an educational problem. "We are of opinion that the Franchise Commission should consider the possibility of framing a suitable educational qualification as an additional qualification for the franchise, bearing in mind the ideal enunciated at the end of paragraph 5". That ideal would apply also, if I may say so, to the sub-communities.

*Mr. Foot:* Could not that be met if we put a fullstop at "franchise"?

*Chairman:* A stop at "franchise". Would that meet you?

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* I object to it wholesale.



*Sir Robert Hamilton:* We have already got paragraph 5. Does not that cover your point?

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* In interpreting the word "community" there might be a doubt. When we say "community" we think of the Hindu as against the Muhammadan. Here the trouble would be between the Hindus themselves, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin.

*Chairman:* I do not pretend to know anything about India, but I always thought that in Madras you referred to the Brahmin community and the non-Brahmin community; they are always treated as communities.

*Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam:* That controversy was very much to the front during the last reforms, but now, because the non-Brahmins have not asked for any special privileges, one is apt to treat them all as one community. I am afraid the non-Brahmins might raise an objection, and there might be a difficulty about education being accepted as a qualification.

*Chairman:* After all, this is not a statute; if it was a statute your criticism would be most cogent. All we are giving is a few main principles, that the Franchise Commission may bear them in mind, and consider them. We need not particularise further I think.

Now No. 8. Military Service qualification. Is there any objection to No. 8?

*Mr. Joshi:* I dissent to 7 and 8.

*Chairman:* I thought we had largely met you on No. 6 by putting in this thing about wages. It was meant to meet you. Now you want to dissent to No. 7.

*Mr. Joshi:* The difficulty is this: by having 7, 8 and 9 we are creating a new class of voters belonging to the higher classes, with the result that to that extent the enfranchisement proposal, namely, up to 25 per cent., will be absorbed by the higher classes, and the enfranchisement will not sufficiently reach the lower classes. That is the criticism on all these three paragraphs.

*Chairman:* Your recommendation of adult suffrage covers the whole thing.

*Mr. Joshi:* Even if the franchise is not granted, a limitation of the qualification of property or income will be more suitable. That is our criticism of these paragraphs. If any limitation is to be made, we prefer a limitation by the property qualification and nothing more. I think that view should be expressed in some form.

*Sir R. Hamilton:* Does not your wages cover that?

*Mr. Joshi:* No, we are not content with leaving the qualification there. You take away what you give. If there is no limitation of 25 per cent. we cannot decide anything.

*Chairman:* We record your dissent, but I think I ought to warn you that a great many of the Committee, in order to get



unanimity, assented to your proposal of including wages in No. 6, in the hope that then you would show a like conciliatory attitude and consent to the educational qualification, the military service qualification, and so on. The whole thing is subject to the ideal of adult suffrage, which we recommend, and to your note of dissent saying you think this proposal is quite inadequate.

*Mr. Joshi:* My criticism is not properly understood. If you make wages a qualification, we consider that that qualification will apply to everybody; every educated man will have a vote. There will be a new class of voters, and that class will consist of students, nobody else, because every educated man will have some income, he is living on something, he is not a beggar if he is living on something; then who is brought in by this educational test except the students?

*Mr. Foot:* You may take the women who may come in under the educational qualification who may not be in receipt of income at all. A woman may go upon the register as the wife of an elector, as the widow of an elector, but you may have the unmarried woman who may not be in receipt of income and who may not therefore come under that clause and who may be able to come in under Section 7.

*Mr. Joshi:* I admit that the case of women is different. I agree that in the case of some females there will be no income; therefore there is a difference to that extent. But my argument is this, that the object of enfranchisement is the transference of political power from the class which enjoys it to-day—

*Chairman:* What I shall do is to record your dissent to any educational qualification.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* Then I shall object to the inclusion of wages in No. 6.

*Chairman:* Now you have lost what to my mind might have been of great value to you; you are now going to get dissents with regard to wages.

*Mr. Joshi:* I am quite prepared to fight that question out anywhere; if not here, outside.

*Sir P. C. Mitter:* I withdraw.

*Chairman:* You dissent to No. 7. Do you dissent to any educational qualification?

*Mr. Joshi:* Nos. 7, 8 and 9.

*Chairman:* Your dissent will be recorded.

We have finished No. 7.

Is there any objection to No. 8 other than those mentioned?

Now No. 9. I record Mr. Joshi's dissent, if he desires it. Do you desire it?

*Mr. Joshi:* Yes.

*Chairman:* You have already recorded your general dissent on the principle that you are prepared for adult suffrage and nothing



else. Now you want a special dissent recorded with regard to women's vote.

*Mr. Joshi:* My reasons are quite different. I will make clear what my reason is.

*Chairman:* Then I record your dissent to the proposal for enfranchising women.

*Mr. Joshi:* Yes.

*Chairman:* Then No. 10. The franchise for special constituencies. Is that agreed? (*Agreed.*)

Then No. 11. Urban and rural enfranchisement. (*Agreed.*)

No. 12. Residential requirement. (*Agreed.*)

No. 13. The future electorate.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* We want to record dissent.

*Mr. Jadhav:* I propose that the figure "ten years" should be changed to "nine years".

*Chairman:* It is proposed that "ten" should be changed to "nine". Is there anybody else of that opinion?

As you are all alone, Mr. Jadhav, you had better let it stand. We will record your dissent.

Now paragraph 14. Franchise for the Central or Federal Legislature. I am not sure that paragraph 14 is at all satisfactory as it stands. We never really came to a conclusion on paragraph 14, and I did the best I could. Then I discovered that I really had not got the material, and I think the true position with regard to 14 was really this, that we were all so firmly of opinion that it was idle to consider what the electorate or franchise should be unless and until we knew much more about the second Chamber that we really thought we had better say nothing about it at all. On reconsidering this thing, it seems to me we had better adhere strictly to that attitude. That preserves everybody's position, if we simply say something of this sort: "The form of the Central or Federal Legislature has not yet been decided and in these circumstances we do not find it possible to make any observations with regard to the franchise systems." Something quite simple like that. May I take it that that is the sense of the meeting? (*Agreed.*)

We will have this Report prepared, and of course we shall report to the Plenary Meeting.

*Mr. Foot:* There is only one point. In view of the general objection based upon the claim for adult suffrage, need you have a note following each paragraph? Would not there be a general note at the end embodying the objection taken by Mr. Joshi and his colleagues?

*Chairman:* I think that would be better for you, I quite understand your position.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* I leave it to you.



*Chairman:* If I may say so, I think it might make you appear to be in rather a false position if, for instance, you appeared to be objecting to the women's vote.

*Dr. Ambedkar:* We have very good ground for doing that. We are quite prepared, in our minds, and we can meet whatever objection may be raised on that ground. We have no theoretical objection to women.

*Mr. Jadhav:* The maximum of 25 per cent. will be taken up by women, and then there will be no necessity of any other lowering of the franchise.

*(The proceedings then terminated.)*



## Sub-Committee No. VI (Franchise).

REPORT PRESENTED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE CONFERENCE, HELD ON 16TH JANUARY, 1931.

1. The terms of reference to this sub-Committee were as follows:—

“ On what main principles is the Franchise to be based for men and women.”

The following Delegates were selected to serve on the sub-Committee:—

Sir W. A. Jowitt (*Chairman*).

Lord Zetland.

Major Stanley.

Sir R. Hamilton.

Mr. Foot.

Dr. Ambedkar.

Mr. Basu.

Mr. Barooah.

Mr. Chintamani.

Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq.

Mr. Ghuznavi.

Lieut.-Colonel Gidney.

Sir Ghulam Hussain

Hidayatullah.

Mr. Hafiz Hidayat Husain.

Mr. B. V. Jadhav.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir.

Mr. Joshi.

Dr. Narendra Nath Law.

Sir P. C. Mitter.

Mr. Pannir Selvam.

Raja of Parlakimedi.

Mr. K. T. Paul.

Mr. Ramachandra Rao.

Mr. Shiva Rao.

Sardar Sampuran Singh.

Sardar Ujjal Singh.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad.

Kunwar Bisheswar Dayal  
Seth.

Sir Phiroze Sethna.

Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan.

Mr. Zafrullah Khan.

Begum Shah Nawaz.

Mrs. Subbarayan.

Mr. Srinivasan.

Mr. S. B. Tambe.

Sir Hubert Carr.

2. The sub-Committee met on the 19th, 22nd, and 30th of December, 1930, and on the 1st of January, 1931, and have authorised me to present this Report.

3. In our discussion of the franchise principles we have found that they were closely connected with questions which more properly concern the composition of the legislature, the nature of the constituencies, and the qualifications for candidates for election. These points have not been considered in the sub-Committee as they fall outside its terms of reference but we are of opinion that they should be further examined since the efficacy of any franchise system depends as much on these points as on the qualifications for the franchise.

4. *Extension of the franchise.*—While it was generally held that adult suffrage was the goal which should ultimately be attained, it was agreed that the basis of the franchise could forthwith be broadened and that a large increase was desirable.



Some difference of opinion existed as to the extent to which this was practicable in present circumstances, and it was realised that the sub-Committee had not the necessary material to determine the precise limits of the advance. The Statutory Commission suggested such an increase in the number of electors as would bring that number up to 10 per cent. of the total population. Some of our members thought that an increase to 25 per cent. of the total population was immediately practicable.

We recommend that an expert Franchise Commission should be appointed with instructions to provide for the immediate increase of the electorate so as to enfranchise not less than 10 per cent. of the total population and indeed a larger number—but not more than 25 per cent. of the total population—if that should, on a full investigation, be found practicable and desirable.

We recommend that, in addition to providing for this increase, the Commission should consider the introduction of a scheme by which all adults not entitled to a direct vote would be grouped together in primary groups of about 20 or in some other suitable manner, for the election of one representative member from each group, who would be entitled to vote in the Provincial elections either in the same constituencies as the directly qualified voters or in separate constituencies to be formed for them.

[Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Srinivasan, Mr. K. T. Paul, and Mr. Jadhav regard these proposals as quite inadequate and consider that the immediate introduction of adult suffrage is both practicable and desirable.]

Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Sir P. C. Mitter dissent from these proposals and consider that the basis of the franchise should be broadened, if at all, by another system.]

5. *Uniformity of qualifications for the franchise.*—We recommend that in any given area the franchise qualifications should be the same for all communities; but we desire that the Franchise Commission in making their proposals should bear in mind that the ideal system would as nearly as possible give each community a voting strength proportional to its numbers and that the Commission should so contrive their franchise system as to secure this result in so far as it may be practicable.

[Sardar Ujjal Singh, Sardar Sampuran Singh, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, and Lieut.-Colonel Gidney dissent from the latter part of this conclusion.]

6. *Property qualification.*—We consider that there should be a property qualification for the franchise and that in this connection the word “property” should be understood in its widest sense as including not only the ownership of landed property but also the occupation of landed or house property or the receipt of income or wages whether in cash or kind.

7. *Educational qualification.*—We are of opinion that the Franchise Commission should consider the possibility of framing a suitable educational qualification as an additional qualification for



the franchise, bearing in mind the ideal enunciated at the end of paragraph 5.

8. *Military service qualification.*—We are agreed that the existing Military Service qualification should be retained and we recommend that the Franchise Commission should consider the extension of this qualification so as to include service in the Auxiliary and Territorial Forces.

9. *Special franchise qualification for women.*—We observe that under the existing franchise the number of women voters is infinitesimal as compared with that of men. No system of franchise can be considered as satisfactory, or as likely to lead to good government where such a great disparity exists between the voting strength of the two sexes. We do not anticipate that the recommendations we have already made will reduce this disparity, nor do we think that they provide sufficiently for the enfranchisement of women. We therefore agree that special qualifications should be prescribed for women but we feel that there is not sufficient material before us to justify an attempt to formulate these special qualifications. We therefore recommend that the Franchise Commission should devote special attention to this question in the light of all evidence available including the recommendations of the Statutory Commission and the suggestion made in this sub-Committee that the age limit mentioned in the proposals of the Statutory Commission should be lowered from 25 to 21.

[Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, and Mr. Srinivasan dissent from the proposals in paragraphs 7, 8, and 9.]

10. *The franchise for special constituencies.*—We are of opinion that the franchise qualifications for special constituencies depend essentially on the nature of those constituencies. We are not empowered to consider the latter point nor are we in possession of information as to what special constituencies are contemplated. These questions require examination by a competent body. So far as the franchise aspect has been discussed in this sub-Committee a division of opinion has shown itself as to the desirability of permitting a voter qualified in both a general and a special constituency to vote in both.

11. *Urban and rural enfranchisement.*—We are of opinion that the Franchise Commission should endeavour so to adjust the franchise qualifications as to remove in those areas where it may exist any marked disparity in the operation of the franchise qualifications in urban as compared with rural areas.

12. *The residential requirement.*—We are of opinion that the residential qualification for the vote required by the electoral rules of certain Provinces should be abolished.

13. *The future electorate.*—We consider it inadvisable to lay down any programme of automatic extensions of the franchise. We prefer that it should be left to each Provincial Legislature to extend its franchise at its discretion after the lapse of 10 years from the date of the introduction of the new Constitutions.



[Mr. Joshi, Mr. Shiva Rao, Dr. Ambedkar, and Mr. Srinivasan consider that a programme of automatic extension of the franchise should be laid down.]

14. *Franchise for the Central or Federal Legislature.*—The form of the Central or Federal Legislature has not yet been decided and in these circumstances we do not find it possible to make any suggestions regarding a suitable franchise system.

[Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq and Mr. Ghuznavi desire it to be recorded that their assent to this report is contingent on the retention of separate electorates.]

(Signed) W. A. JOWITT.

*Chairman.*

St. James's Palace, London.

1st January, 1931.



## APPENDIX I.

## SUB-COMMITTEE No. VI.

(FRANCHISE.)

MEMORANDUM ON THE POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN UNDER  
A NEW INDIAN CONSTITUTION.\*

BY MRS. SUBBARAYAN AND BEGUM SHAH NAWAZ.

In this Memorandum we desire to ask the Round Table Conference to give certain special consideration to the political status of women under the new Constitution.

In the first place, we consider it vital that the Conference itself should decide what women's position in the future Constitution is to be. We ask that the Conference shall bear in mind the statement in the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission that "The women's movement in India holds the key of progress, and the results it may attain are incalculably great"; and, from this point of view, shall regard it as a national question of great importance. We have been filled with apprehension by the attitude of the Government of India to it. They have brushed aside the question of women's political status as though it were a matter of no importance, and one which could be dealt with or not by the Legislatures of the future at will. In our opinion, if this question is postponed to a future and uncertain date, after the Indian Constitution has been re-formed and the claims of others to special consideration have been weighed and settled, it will be far harder to secure for it adequate examination. We urge upon the Conference, therefore, the importance of taking this matter into consideration now, and of examining the claims of women at the same time as those of other claimants to special consideration.

There are two other points round which our anxieties chiefly centre. The question of the franchise is one. The present voting qualification, given on equal terms to men and women and based mainly on property, produces in actual practice a very great discrepancy between them in voting power, as the number of women holding property is small. We hope that this question of franchise will receive most careful consideration, and that a franchise qualification will be accepted which will give women their due weight in returning representatives to Legislative Bodies.

The other question on which we feel strongly the necessity of special consideration is that of seats for women on Legislatures. We may be asked why we require such special consideration. There has been, we believe, a theory in some quarters that women only want "a fair field and no favour" in India. Much as we believe in that ideal as an ultimate aim, we feel that in this opening of a new national life under a new Constitution, representation of women on Legislatures must to some extent and for a limited period be definitely secured. We regard the phrase "a fair field and no favour" at the present time as an illusory one; for, even with a franchise which produced equal voting power with men, we doubt very much whether, at first set off, it would produce a real equality of opportunity in the political arena. Contemporary events show that, after women have been enfranchised, the general public has as a rule been slow to elect them in any number to public assemblies, so great is the force of convention and habit. We need quote only the experience of Canada, Australia and the Irish Free State. England itself, where women have for long taken an important part in public life, has taken twelve years to elect fifteen women to Parliament.

\* This Memorandum was also circulated to sub-Committee No. III (Minorities).



We therefore think it unlikely that India, in the first years of her new constitution, will elect many women in open contest to her Legislatures; though it is probable that a small number may be so returned. Yet these first years of India's new life will be of the utmost importance in shaping the whole future of the country; and it is in our opinion vital that the voice of women on the Legislatures should be numerically sufficient to be heard. We think, therefore, that some special arrangement, allotting temporarily a small proportion of the seats on the Legislatures to women, is really necessary. It should be a purely temporary measure; and we believe that after a time, when the public is no longer startled by the conception of women in public life, and has learnt to appreciate their presence there, such provision should be no longer necessary, and women will be able really to enter the political arena on the basis of "a fair field and no favour."

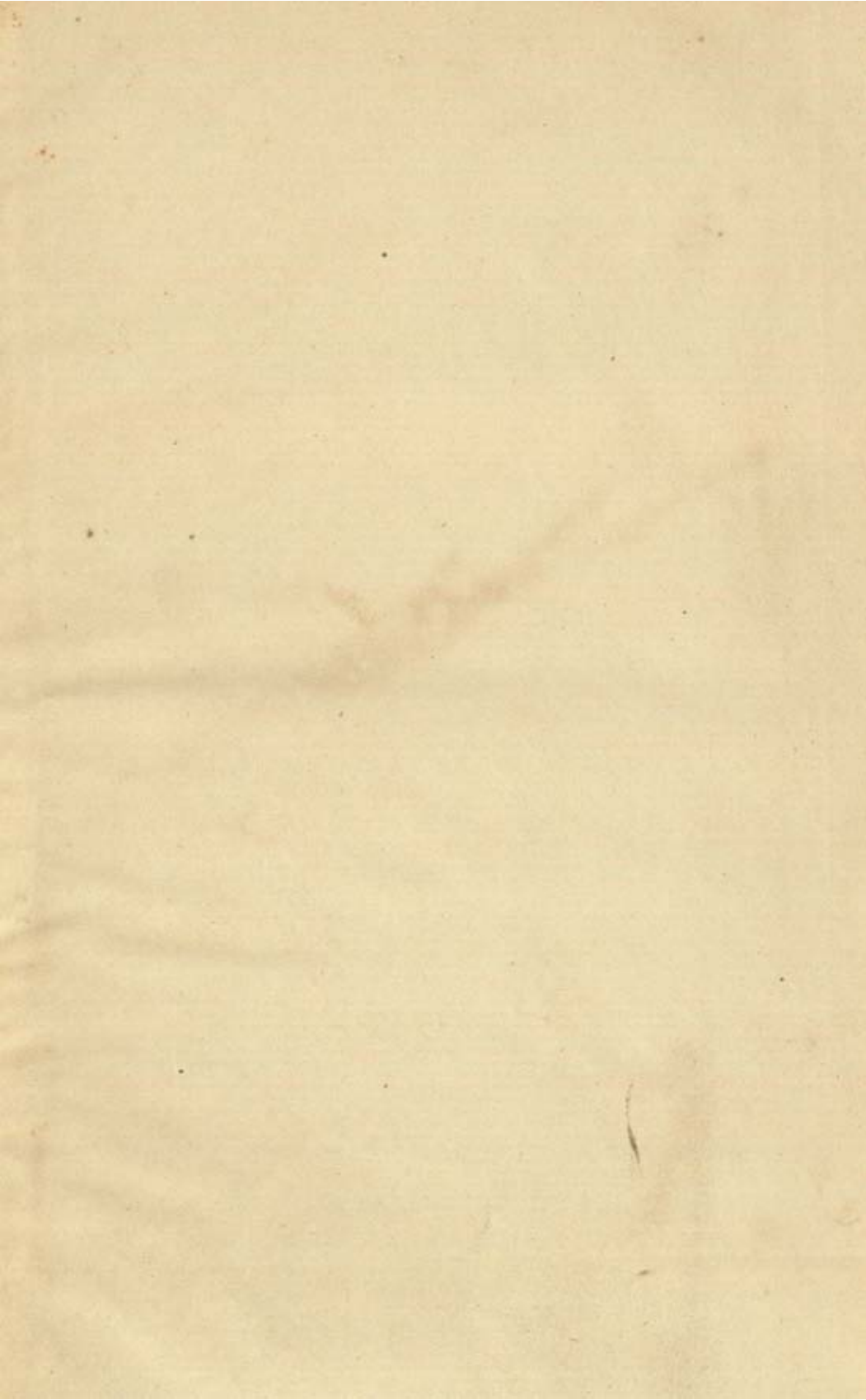
In conclusion, we wish respectfully to urge that no question of franchise for any Legislature, or of seats for any Legislature, may be settled unless the views of women on the matter have been consulted. We would also wish to suggest that the principle that sex should be no disqualification for serving our country should be embodied in the Constitution.

We would add that we have intentionally touched only on the outlines of the women's question in this Memorandum. We think that it is not necessary in this statement to give a detailed examination of the methods for securing an adequate franchise, or special seats on the Legislatures, though we are prepared to put forward proposals on both these heads. The main object of this Memorandum is to urge that the question of women's political status shall receive consideration by the Conference, and to indicate a few practical questions which closely affect it.



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